

THE THEOLOGY OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD (1714-1770)

Thesis

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PREFACE

Several biographies of Whitefield have been written, chiefly in the nineteenth century, but none of them endeavours to reveal his theology in any extensive fashion. This thesis is an examination of the theological principles and emphases which guided this great preacher who, together with the two Wesleys, stands in the forefront of those men responsible for the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century. Throughout, an attempt has been made to reflect the theology of the Revivalists as a whole, to discover whether Whitefield's theology followed primarily the same lines as that theology, and, particularly, to set his theology over against the theological trends of the age and to trace his Calvinism as it touched the generally Arminian tendencies of the Wesleyan development of Methodism. It was inevitable that a fairly full account of the well-known controversy between John Wesley and Whitefield over the question of predestination and other allied doctrines, should be given (Chapter Three). In place of the usual "Summary and Conclusion" which, as the final chapter, would normally have recapitulated in a straightforward manner the doctrines dealt with in the previous pages and have entailed much repetition of conclusions already written into the main body of the thesis, it has been thought more profitable to disclose and compare assessments of Whitefield's theology made in his own and later times, and to base a conclusion on these, bearing in mind always the results of the present research. At all times an attempt has been made to let the preacher speak for himself. Hence the rather full and numerous quotations introduced from his own works.

It/

It should be noted that the volume of Whitefield's "Sermons" used throughout and quoted in the footnotes etc. is the one entitled "Sermons on Important Subjects by the Rev. George Whitefield, A.M., with the Character of the Author by the Rev. Joseph Smith" (printed London, 1825 - the same reprinted London, 1828).

All quotations from Whitefield's works, it will be observed, have been edited as regards punctuation where it has been considered necessary to alter these for the sake of a more fluent and readable text. In doing this, the sense of the passages concerned has been carefully maintained.

It is hoped that the first Appendix will be helpful for quick reference to the chronology of Whitefield, if need should arise.

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CHAPTER ONE

A. Life of George Whitefield

George Whitefield was born at the Bell Inn, Gloucester, in December, 1714. He was the youngest of the children - one daughter and six sons - born to Thomas and Elizabeth Whitefield, who kept the Inn. He tells us that his mother "was used to say even when he was an infant, that she expected more comfort from him than any other of her children".¹ His mother who "had a tender faithful heart, commendable prudence, a great desire for the welfare of her children, and much willingness to deny herself for their sakes",² was of Bristol city, where Thomas, the father of George, had been a wine-merchant before the family moved to Gloucester. This Thomas was the grandson and nephew of the clergymen who successively held the Church of England living at Rockhampton in Gloucestershire. In 1716, he died and the youngest son never remembered him. Mrs. Whitefield married again when George was ten years old, according to him, "an unhappy match as for temporals, but God over-ruled it for good. It set my brothers upon thinking more than otherwise they would have done, and made an uncommon impression upon my own heart in particular."³ His mother never allowed him as a youngster to serve in the public business of the house. Nevertheless, as a child and as a young man he did not have the more helpful environment which John Wesley, the/

1 W. Wale, "Whitefield's Journals with Appreciations", p 27
2 J.P.Gledstone, "George Whitefield, M.A., Field-Preacher", p 2
3 W.Wale, op.cit., p 29

the other great leader of the Revival, enjoyed as a youth in the Epworth Rectory.

Despite the fact that he says "it would be endless to recount the sins and offences of my younger days, they are more in number than the hairs of my head", most of the misdemeanours of his childhood which he records can be put down to the natural high spirits of youth and especially to his own impetuous, fiery spirit. He tells of several petty thefts from and deceits put upon his mother, together with some frivolous escapades; but a lot of his self-condemnation may be ascribed to an over-sensitive conscience, which later made him look back with distrust on even mild fun and play. The common amusements of the day, particularly play-acting, seem to have appealed to him tremendously, and his own dramatic instinct found early expression. But other and more potent influences for his future were at work in his life. He appears to have been a youth of contrasts. Even in the midst of his irreverence and profanity he had longings after a better life. Imitating ministers, he said he was going to become one when he grew up. The money he stole from his mother he "gave to the poor", and the books taken from others (later restored fourfold) were "books of devotion". The Bible was not unknown to him though he used it for bad as well as for good ends. To sum up in Gledstone's words:

"All the man could be traced in the boy - delight in the emotional and the exciting, a ready power of appropriating and applying to himself and to his enemies the words of Scripture, and aptness for imitation".¹

It is known that he was in 1726 at the school of St. Mary de Crypt (a parish in Gloucester), apparently the last of not a few grammar/

¹ Gledstone, op.cit., p 4

grammar schools he had tried. This last school did not change him. Play-acting still fascinated. His powers of elocution made him popular on great occasions and as an actor in the school plays (some composed by the master himself). In one play, dressed in girl's clothes, he took the woman's part, a boyish prank of which he was afterwards ashamed. Indeed he would have liked to take up the stage as a career and there is no doubt he had the making of an actor in him. But his powers in this respect were to be used in the future to a better and a higher purpose. Before 1729 he was eager to dispense with even the small restraint of this schooling, and as a university career seemed beyond him, he managed to persuade his mother to permit him to leave school thus early. In addition, no doubt he felt some responsibility to help the family finances. As he himself expresses it, "I put on my blue apron, and my snuffers, washed mops, cleaned rooms and in one word, became professed and common drawer for nigh a year and a half."¹

During this period he read his Bible frequently when work was done. He found time to write two or three sermons. "The first lessons of experience were being wrought into the heart of a quick learner, whose waywardness was receiving its first stern rebuke."² His mother had to leave the Inn a year later and for a while George acted as assistant to his elder brother, but because he fell out with his sister-in-law, he left and spent two months in Bristol. This he thought was God's way of "forcing him out of the public business, and calling him from drawing wine for drunkards to draw water/

¹ W.Wale, op.cit., p 30

² Gledstone, op.cit., p 6

water out of the wells of salvation for the refreshment of His spiritual Israel".¹

"At Bristol, he experienced the first of those rapturous feelings with which, a few years later, his soul became absolutely penetrated and possessed, then refined and gloriously illuminated. From the first it was no weakness of his to feel with half his heart: 'with all thy soul and mind and strength' was to him an easy condition of religious feeling and activity. He now had much sensible devotion and was filled with 'unspeakable raptures', sometimes 'carried out beyond himself'. He longed after the Sacrament: he pondered the 'Imitation of Christ' and delighted in it", and so on.² "But in the midst of these illuminations something surely whispered, 'This will not last'".³

This proved true, for on return to Gloucester, the old war between the flesh and the spirit broke out again. His former school-fellows now misled him into his old delight in amusements and vanity of person.

"But God", he says, in harmony with the Calvinism he afterwards adopted, "whose gifts and calling are without repentance, would let nothing pluck me out of His hands, though I was constantly doing despite to the Spirit of grace.....One morning, as I was reading a play to my sister, said I, 'Sister, God intends something for me that we know not of. As I have been diligent in business, I believe many would gladly have me for an apprentice; but every way seems to be barred up, so I think that God will provide for me some other way that we cannot apprehend.'"⁴

His time of ^{un}/employment was ended when by chance his mother heard of the way in which another youth had financed his studies at Oxford. At the news, she turned to George and said, "Will you go to Oxford, George?" He replied, "With all my heart." Assistance from moneyed folk and a position as servitor at Pembroke College were applied for. In the meantime Whitefield went back to the Grammar School. Except for working hard and successfully, he did not mend his ways at first, but before a year was out he had reformed/

1 ~~W~~Wale, op.cit., p 31

2 Gledstone, op.cit., p 7

3 ~~W~~Wale, op.cit., p 31

4 Ibid, p 32

reformed somewhat and resolutely tried to be more serious and strict in his religious life. Much of his piety at this stage was akin to that filling the days of the Oxford Methodists whom he was soon to join.

In 1732 he went up to Oxford. Without any false pride he did the work of a servant, looking after the needs of his "gentle-men". "The young servitor lightened the burdens of friends who stood as his money securities, toiled at his classics, adhered to his late religious practices at the Grammar School, and thus laid a good foundation for a manly life".¹ It is interesting to note the books which influenced him at this time, as other books, such as Thomas a Kempis and Drelincourt's "The Christian's Defence against the Fears of Death", had done earlier. Here he read William Law's two writings, "A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life" and "Christian Perfection". Apparently he kept aloof from the other students who tried to tempt him to join "in their excess of riot", but who, when he proved firm, "let him alone as a singular odd fellow". It was at this time that he was finally convinced by God not to read any more plays and "blessed be His Name, I have not read any such book since."

Being alone in this fashion it is not surprising that he should have been sympathetic to the band of young men headed by John Wesley, commonly called "Methodists", who lived by "rule" as he himself was trying to do. He says his "soul had longed for above a twelve-month to be acquainted with some of them."²

At/

1 Gledstone, op.cit., p 11

2 ~~W~~Wale, op.cit., p 36

At last the way was opened, and on a memorable occasion for them both, Whitefield met Charles Wesley, who became his firm friend ever after. Charles gave him Professor Francke's treatise "Against the Fear of Man", and "The Country Parson's Advice to his Parishion-ers" at this first meeting. When Whitefield joined the Methodists (the end of 1734 or early 1735) they were fifteen in number (at most they were 27). It is important to note the kind of men these were and their life, because of their influence on Whitefield.

They were marked men - their austerities, their devoutness, and their charitable labours amongst the poor, attracted general attention. They were called "Bible Moths", "Enthusiasts", "The Godly Company", "Sacramentarians", "The Holy Club", as well as "Methodists". Why ?

It should be said firstly that serious study, especially of the Bible, was one of their abiding characteristics. It was, however, their moral earnestness which made the University take notice of them. They took their religion seriously. They sought with amazing thoroughness to make their life harmonise with their creed. As a fact, it had all begun that way. Charles Wesley and two or three others, when his brother John left Oxford for a while, had decided to do exactly as the University regulations called upon them to do - an unheard-of practice. Then when John returned in 1730 and became their leader, they really began to do this thoroughly. Their disciplined habits were what impressed the critics. They bound themselves to regular seasons of prayer.¹ They were systematic in their self-examination and in early days stress was laid on auricular confession. They carried out definitely allocated works of charity, devoting all their money, after necessities had been/

¹ Regular early rising was their practice then and all their lives.

been provided for, to these objects. They kept the fasts of the Church after John Clayton, a strong man with definite religious views, joined their Society. Their scrupulous attendance on the Sacrament was a matter for ridicule as they went Sunday by Sunday to Church. From all this there is obvious truth in Wesley's own statement that the Oxford Methodists were in the strongest sense High Churchmen. Wesley, for instance, at this time held firmly to the belief in Apostolic Succession and it influenced his conduct for many years. Apart from the Wesleys, their personal influence must have been weighty. Benjamin Ingham as the Yorkshire evangelist, James Hervey (one of Whitefield's converts) as the author of "Meditations among the Tombs" and other books, Gambold as a Moravian bishop, Thomas Broughton as secretary to the S.P.C.K.(1743-1777) as well as Church of England clergyman, and Clayton as a leading member of the Manchester clergy, later became celebrities. But John and Charles Wesley in particular influenced Whitefield, who reached a crisis in this period. For the most interesting part of Whitefield's spiritual life begins at this point, up to which there has been an uncertain varying war carried on against sin, coupled with many defeated attempts to attain to an extreme form of external piety.

He was now to try each of the ways of being a Christian which have won favour with mankind at different times: the way of 'salvation by works', the way of 'quietism', the way of 'justification by faith alone'. Already, just after that first meeting with Charles Wesley referred to above, he had had an unforgettable experience. Wesley had lent him Henry Scougal's little book, "The Life of God in the Soul of Man". In it he read something which made/

made him wonder then, but which when finally he won through to inward peace, had a powerful and lasting effect on the whole of his theology and preaching life.¹ Scougal thought "that some falsely placed religion in going to Church, doing hurt to no one, being constant in the duties of the closet, and now and then reaching out their hands to give alms to their poor neighbours." It was a new revelation for Whitefield to read further on "that true religion is a union of the soul with God, of Christ formed within us", because he says that, upon reading this, "a ray of Divine light instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and from that moment but not till then, did I know that I must be a new creature."²

But this light was temporarily dimmed when, consulting Charles Wesley who with John had not as yet experienced the great truth which was to become the theme of their preaching in later years, he was advised to adopt the whole plan for living of the Methodists. As has been seen, to live by rule was the fundamental principle of their religion, and thus Whitefield, being led astray, tried again his old scheme of salvation by works but this time more inflexibly and thoroughly. But he was not satisfied, because pride in what he did kept coming in. After much spiritual turmoil and striving, he turned to quietism. This was ended on John Wesley's advice, but another return to "good works" nearly killed him. However, the illness resulting from the privations to which he subjected himself was the prelude to that living experience which before long "was to become the joy of thousands". Seven weeks after Easter, 1735, his spirit found release. In the sickroom, he felt again/

1 D. Butler, "Wesley and Whitefield in Scotland", pp 5-11
 2 WWale, op.cit., p 37

again the illumination he had known when reading Scougal's book.

He says:

"After having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan, and many months' inexpressible trials by night and day under the spirit of bondage, God was pleased at length to remove the heavy load, to enable me to lay hold on His dear Son by a living faith, and, by giving me the spirit of adoption, to seal me, as I humbly hope, even to the day of everlasting redemption. But oh! with what joy - joy unspeakable - even joy that was full and big with glory, was my soul filled, when the weight of sin went off, and an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith broke in upon my disconsolate soul! Surely it was the day of my espousals, a day to be had in everlasting remembrance."¹

The change was definite, instantaneous and complete.

"I know the place; it may perhaps be superstitious but whenever I go to Oxford, I cannot help running to the spot where Jesus Christ first revealed Himself to me, and gave me the new birth."²

Justification by faith had become an experience and henceforth he preached and taught what he had felt of this truth.

After conversion he went to Gloucester to convalesce from his illness. Here he formed converts he won into a little society, which met the same contempt he and his fellows had known at Oxford. At Bristol about the same time he had no success. These lessons in humility were added to his first lesson of trust in "that Almighty Friend upon Whose bountiful and loving care he cast himself throughout the whole of his poverty-stricken life";³ for some upon whom he had relied to help him financially disappointed him - and unexpected, generous benefactors appeared. Reading the Bible and praying over it confirmed his faith in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit who was to him a living Comforter, the power of God. From this time can be seen his utter consecration to Christ - his ability to/

1 W.Wale, op.cit., footnote to p 48, i.e. the text of the 1756 edition of Whitefield's autobiography.

2. Sermons, p 702

3 Gledstone, op.cit., p 23

to concentrate on the one great cause of Christ's Kingdom, his entire independence of all other pursuits which usually engage the attention of most men.

Bishop Benson (Gloucester) was prepared to ordain him now, but he did not want this step yet. He says he continued to pray against becoming a pastor of men's souls so soon, and he besought his Oxford friends to help him frustrate any purpose to persuade him in the matter. In the end, after an inward struggle, he gave way because "I then began to think to myself, that if I held out any longer, I should fight against God." Therefore he prepared himself, very seriously, for his ordination next "Ember Days". He studied and meditated upon the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy, the Thirty Nine Articles, and the vows he was to make in a few months' time; and he engaged in much prayer.

The following is an account of his ordination which he wrote to a Mr. S-----, dated June 20, 1736:

"My friend, This is a day to be remembered, for about noon I was solemnly admitted by good Bishop Benson before many witnesses into holy orders.....At the same time, I trust, I answered to every question from the bottom of my heart, and heartily prayed that God might say Amen. I hope the good of souls will be my only principle of action. Let come what will, life or death, depth or height, I shall henceforth live like one who this day, in the presence of men and angels, took the Holy Sacrament, upon the profession of being inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon me that ministration in the Church." ¹

As Whitefield was the first of the leaders of the Revival to enter into that great conversion experience which is the main-spring of all effective evangelism, so he was the first great preacher of the Revival. A week after his ordination he preached his first sermon to a crowded audience in the church of St. Mary de Crypt/

¹ "Collected Works of Whitefield", vol. I, p 15

Crypt, where he had been baptised and where as a boy he had often mocked. On this famous occasion, he is reported to have driven fifteen people mad and Bishop Benson, evidently believing that any response was better than the normal one of the people concerned, expressed the hope that the madness would last!! He then returned to Oxford for a brief interval to take his B.A. Degree. There followed further study, work, and communion with his friends, the Methodists, of whom he was now (with John and Charles Wesley away in the colony of Georgia) appointed leader. But before he was aged 22, he was called away from this tranquil life. It all began when he was asked to fill the place of a friend in a London pulpit in August, 1736. From then on, his success as a preacher was phenomenal. In less than twelve months he startled England by his oratory.

"For him to preach was at once to spread excitement and draw together masses of people; and when they came he never lost his hold upon them. His manner always charmed, never offended..... His thought was always marked by good sense; no one could be disgusted with inanity. His emotion was always fresh, streaming from his heart as from a perennial fountain.....The hearts of most were melted in the intense heat of the preacher's fervour like silver in a refiner's furnace."¹

Before the end of 1737 he had decided to go to Georgia to be a co-worker with the Wesleys, but ere he sailed (December 1737), he stirred the whole country, especially Bristol and London.

His visit to Georgia was very brief. The Wesleys had both returned before he reached America. When he arrived there and began his work among the settlers and the Indians, he found he was hampered because he was not a priest. Soon he returned to Britain for this purpose, landing in Ireland, November, 1738. He found many/

¹ Gledstone, op.cit., p 33

many things changed. Both the Wesleys had now passed through the same radical spiritual experience as himself. City pulpits were closed to them and they were in close and constant converse with the Moravians. Whitefield joined his two friends, and began immediately an amazingly energetic life of preaching, expounding to religious Societies, attending conferences and "love feasts" at Fetter Lane Society and elsewhere, besides engaging in other activities.

On January 10, 1739, Bishop Benson ordained him as priest. W.B. Fitzgerald says of the year after this:

"As with Wesley so with Whitefield, the year 1739 was typical of his whole career. It was a year of beginnings, a year of innovation. At its commencement he was a newly-ordained priest of the Church of England, commissioned to minister to the congregation of Savannah in Georgia; when the year closed, he was the evangelical free-lance of two continents. Little by little as the Established Church closed its doors to him, greater doors were opened. He was forbidden to preach within consecrated walls, with the result that he addressed tens of thousands without..... He preached here, there and everywhere, though church after church was refused to him. At Bristol he boldly took a step which profoundly influenced the whole course of the Revival. The idea of open-air preaching had occurred to him earlier.....He cast all scruples aside and on February 17, for the first time, preached out of doors to a congregation of 200 colliers on Kingswood Hill." The 200 grew in a few days to 5,000 and "from that time forward open-air evangelism became one of the most powerful weapons of the Methodist movement." ¹

He it was who introduced the High Churchman, John Wesley, to this lastmentioned practice of the Revival. In Wales he next attracted great numbers and then, back in London, he was speaking to crowds of from 20 to 30,000 people in Moorfields and on Kennington Common, including among them many of the great people of the land. The majority of these crowds were untouched by the existing/

¹ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, "A New History of Methodism", vol.I, pp 262-263

existing religious agencies of the day. "Preaching up" the "new birth" and other doctrines which had been neglected by most of his contemporaries in the Church of England, he raised opposition from Latitudinarian and other quarters. He was called all kinds of names and

"at least forty nine pamphlets were published during this one year, directly occasioned by the preaching of this young man of twenty five. Some few were replies, but the majority were lampoons, burlesques, and malicious personal attacks."¹

In 1739 Whitefield crossed the Atlantic for the third time, a crossing he was to make in all thirteen times. He visited Scotland not less than fourteen times and Ireland thrice, and he made itinerations about England and Wales without number. It is estimated that he preached about 18,000 sermons during his life.

"It was the statement of one who knew him well, and who was incapable of wilful exaggeration, and it is confirmed by his letters, journals, and a 'cloud of witnesses' that 'in the compass of a single week, and that for years, he spoke in general forty hours, and in very many sixty, and that to thousands: and after his labours, instead of taking any rest, he was engaged in offering up prayers and intercessions, with hymns and spiritual songs, as his manner was, in every house to which he was invited'. Never perhaps, since the Apostolic age, has any man given himself so entirely to preaching the Gospel of Christ for the salvation of souls, adopting as his motto the language of the Apostle Paul, 'This one thing I do'".²

Soon after he returned to America in 1739 he wrote words which echoed Wesley's earlier ones: "the world is now my parish." He recognised his call to a wider sphere than Savannah - which incumbency he soon resigned. Indeed from this year forward until his death in 1770, he led the life of a wanderer, an itinerant preacher. He would be bound to no church, party or sect in particular; but, be they few in number or crowded in their thousands, people/

1 Townsend, Workman, Bayrs, op.cit., vol.I, p 264. For a list of these, see Tyerman, "Life of Whitefield", vol.I, pp 283-285

2 J. Belcher, "George Whitefield", p 38. See also J. Gillies, "Memoirs of George Whitefield", p 330, for extract from funeral sermon on Whitefield by Rev. H. Venn.

people in every land heard his voice as he gladly spent himself preaching to and talking with them.

Some few events in this period must be touched upon.

Being what he was, utterly absorbed in his work, it is a wonder he ever married. There is no doubt that he had marriage in mind as a means of providing a suitable executive officer for his orphanage in Georgia while he was away on his travels,¹ as other and more normal motives such as love were disdained by him. Refused by the young lady whose parents received a letter accompanying his proposal to her with these words in it, "I bless God if I know anything of my own heart, I am free from that foolish passion which the world calls love",² he later married a widow ten years older than himself (November, 1741). "She has been a housekeeper many years", he said. "Once gay: but now a despised follower of the Lamb of God". Elsewhere he confesses that she was "neither rich in fortune, nor beautiful as to her person". But his married life had little influence upon his career so far as can be gathered from the meagre recorded incidents about it.

Some assessment of his relations with John Wesley must be made, particularly in view of the doctrinal differences between them. He and the two Wesleys worked harmoniously together at the outset. They had dealings together with the Moravians, for instance, and their association in field-preaching has also been noted. All three parted from the Moravians later, because they met with some Moravian teachers who so perverted the doctrine of justification by faith alone and depreciated an active righteousness, /

1 Collected Works, vol. I, pp 159, 160, 194

2 Ibid, p 159

-ness, that antinomian tendencies revealed themselves. The antinomianism possible also in those who held to Calvinistic predestinarianism was a contributing ground for Wesley's opposition to the doctrine of the "double decree". This was not the chief ground of his controversy with Whitefield, which was that Calvin's doctrines of Election and Reprobation were entirely wrong: the grace of God was free for every man to accept or reject. Neither man claimed to preach any new truth. "My doctrine said Wesley, "are simply the common fundamental principles of Christianity", and Whitefield said the same again and again - that his theology was to be found in the 'Homilies' and Articles of the Church of England. But while Wesley gave a carefully guarded Arminian interpretation of the Articles, from 1739 on Whitefield gave a Calvinistic interpretation. The latter's change of opinion seems to have developed on his second voyage to America, although there appears to be some slight evidence that it occurred before he left England.¹ There is no doubt that his change of opinion grew and was emphasised by his reading the sermons of and corresponding with the Erskine brothers in Scotland at the same time approximately, and that it was further confirmed by his dealings with the Baptist and Presbyterian ministers when he arrived in the colonies, e.g. through his contacts with such men as the Tennents and Jonathan Edwards(1739). Wesley believed in universal redemption because he held to man's moral freedom, and because he believed the weight of Scripture proved that the love of God in Christ revealed this as God's intention. "For/

1 P 4 of the "Weekly History", No. 4, quotes part of a letter from Whitefield dated Nov. 8, 1739, and the Editor says this "plainly proves that he believed the doctrine of Election before the last time of his leaving England". i.e. Aug. 8, 1739

"For Wesley" (says Dr.Dale)"God did not dwell apart in heights of unapproachable majesty. He believed that in God we live and move and have our being. And yet in the strength of his own moral life, he had a most vivid conviction that he was morally free-free to reject or receive the infinite grace which the living God was pressing upon him, and therefore he was an Arminian." ¹

Whitefield's Calvinism was at first very thorough-going in its character as will be seen later.. However in his extant published sermons it is clear that only in a few cases he preached the doctrine of predestination in its full rigour - in actual fact he was as eloquent as Wesley to offer salvation to all. But the controversy, after Wesley had written and published his sermon on "Free Grace", rebutting the doctrines which were being spread by Whitefield and men like John Cennick, separated the two Methodist leaders for a few years and led to bitterness and sharpness on both sides. Although as early as before the end of 1741, Whitefield and Wesley were reconciled and renewed their friendship,² the differences in theology were not surrendered, and were (as they had been during the height of the conflict) accentuated by other lesser men who had taken sides.³ The result was that in effect the Revival took two forms - one the Arminian under John Wesley (Methodists), and the other the Calvinistic under Whitefield (Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, Lady Huntingdon's group of clergy, the Presbyterian and Dissenting Churches of Britain and America).⁴ Whitefield's Calvinism was not without its/

¹ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol.I, p 212

² Letters to Wesley, Oct. 10,1741 and Oct.11,1742, Collected Works, vol.I, pp 331,448

³ C. Wesley's Journal, vol.II, p 170

⁴ N.Sykes, "Church and State in England in the XVIIIth. Century", p 390.

its advantages in opening doors which otherwise might have been shut to him. As Fitzgerald points out:

"It ought also to be recognised that the great preacher's leaning to Calvinism opened the way to fields of usefulness which would otherwise have been closed to him. In Presbyterian Scotland he had an influence far exceeding that of Wesley.....Whitefield was also welcomed as the natural chief of the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales, among whom Howell Harris (Whitefield's friend) was the moving spirit, and when their first Assembly was held in 1742, he was unanimously elected Moderator. He attended also several later Assemblies. In London, all whose sympathies were with Calvinism rallied round Whitefield and among them not a few Evangelical Dissenters." ¹

The reconciliation between Whitefield and Wesley became more complete with the passing years until in 1749-1750, they each commenced to preach in the societies and chapels belonging to the other, and even took part together in the same services. As Tyerman justly observes:

"This was a new fact in Methodist history. Partisans on both sides had done their utmost to keep Whitefield and Wesley apart from each other; but now their machinations were utterly and finally frustrated. The Methodist chieftains were united, though it had been found impossible to unite their societies." ²

Whitefield's relations with the seceding "Associate Presbytery" in Scotland will appear later, but his labours in connection with the extraordinary revival at Cambuslang must be mentioned. This was during his second visit to Scotland. He took a leading part in the preaching and other activities at the invitation of the Rev. Mr. McCulloch and his colleagues concerned in the movement. Whitefield received much of the attack made against the revival by numbers of opposers, chiefly on the grounds of the unusual symptoms, emotional and physical, accompanying conversion. ³

At/

¹ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol.I, p 269. Cf. Tyerman, op. cit., vol.I, p 275 and D. Butler, op.cit., p 15.

² Op.cit., vol.II, p 247

³ D. MacFarlan, "Revivals of the Eighteenth Century, Particularly at Cambuslang, with Sermons by Whitefield."

At the time when Whitefield's change to Calvinism was taking place, a remarkable personage, Selina Countess of Huntingdon, came to the fore as a powerful patron of Methodist adherents to the Calvinist tradition.

"Of royal descent and aristocratic breeding, trained from childhood in the strictest traditions of her class, familiar with court life, she had yet the courage openly to avow herself a Methodist, and as such, exercised an astonishing influence over some of the most prominent people of the time. Horace Walpole, Chesterfield, Lady Marlborough and others equally well-known, were her personal friends and had a hearty respect for her. King George III held her in high esteem." ¹

The band of chaplains of Calvinist opinion gathered round her household with Whitefield as leader and special favourite, had a far wider influence than their numbers warranted. But being first and foremost a preacher and lacking the genius for organisation of Wesley, Whitefield never led the group with any such degree of success as Wesley led the main body of Methodism. ² The latter with his Societies, classes, superintendents, and conferences, established Methodism firmly as a distinct and coherent entity in the span of his own lifetime.

Whitefield became Lady Huntingdon's chaplain in 1748, and he dedicated the first church erected by her in 1765. From about 1743 onwards, he was divided between his preaching to the aristocratic circles of his patroness, to whom he proved a great attraction, and the crowds of his itineration and his London churches, with whom his heart really was. Trevecca College (founded by Lady Huntingdon 1768, first headmaster Dr. Benson, "visitor" John Fletcher) may be mentioned here, as in this place

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¹ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol.I, p 269

² Note Lord Macaulay's judgment on Wesley: "He had a genius for ecclesiastical government not inferior to Richelieu", Macaulay's Works, vol. V , p 454

men for Lady Huntingdon's churches were trained.¹ Founding the College marks the definite break in fact, though not in avowed intention, of the Calvinistic Methodist element from the Established Church. It is interesting to record that this College trained many men who later became members of the Evangelical Party for reform in the Church of England.

In the earlier years, up to 1745 at least, Whitefield was not without opposition in America. (During his life he spent a total of approximately nine and a half years there). In 1740 the "Querists", presumably members of Newcastle Presbytery, Pennsylvania, published a document questioning the use of certain material in Whitefield's published "Journals" and "Sermons".² He had employed several unguarded expressions in these early writings and when he duly answered their "queries", he withdrew or changed a number of the words and phrases objected to, while firmly retaining others. Pamphlets were also published against him by the Senatus of Harvard College, chiefly opposing his preaching extemporarily and his itinerancy. But he had powerful friends also among the divines of the Colonies. For example, there was a convocation of ministers in Boston (1743) which prepared a report on the American Revival (1734-1742) favourable to Whitefield. One hundred and eighteen men in all gave attestations to the document drawn up. This testimonial is typical of those letters etc./

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- 1 J.H.Overton, "John Wesley", p 166, where it is stated that both these men were dismissed by Lady Huntingdon (1770) after Whitefield's death, for holding views too Arminian.
 - 2 Pamphlet, "An Extract of Sundry Passages taken out of Mr. Whitefield's Printed Sermons, Journals and Letters: together with some Scruples.....To which is added Mr. Whitefield's Answer to the Queries....." London. 1741.

etc. printed in America and Scotland by leading men who realised the benefits of the great evangelist's powerful gifts.¹

The passage of the years brought a diminution of opposition and a mellowing of the protagonists. The Colleges in America acknowledged their debt to him.² Whitefield himself set the tone at the conclusion of his controversy with Wesley: "May God remove all obstacles that now prevent our union; may all disputings cease, and each of us talk of nothing but Jesus and Him crucified".³ On June 24, 1748, he wrote a letter saying that he had finished revising all his "Journals". In it he says:

"Sir, my mistakes have been too many, and my blunders too frequent, to make me set up for infallibility. I came soon into the world; I have carried high sail, whilst running through a whole torrent of popularity and contempt; and by this means, have sometimes been in danger of oversetting. But many and frequent as my mistakes have been or may be, as I have no part to act (if I know anything of my own heart) but to promote God's glory and the good of souls, as soon as I am made sensible of them, they shall be publicly acknowledged and retracted."⁴

No biography however brief would be complete without some reference to his social work. When he first left for Georgia (1737), Whitefield had £ 300 for the relief of the poor of the colony, part of the result of his labours in that first twelve months of fame as a preacher.⁵ Philanthropy was a passion with him as with the other Methodists. He had begun in his Oxford days among the poor and the prisoners of that city. Arriving in Georgia with some of the £ 300 expended on well-chosen necessities for the settlers and their children, it was not long before he heartily approved and decided to begin Charles Wesley's scheme for an /

1 For extracts of this report see Belcher, op.cit., p 263 f.

2 Ibid, p 268

3 Collected Works, vol. I, p 331

4 Ibid, vol.IV, p 245

5 Besides this amount, he had raised £ 1000 for the Charity Schools of London.

an orphanage. The Governor, General Oglethorpe, to whose philanthropic interest the colony owed its existence, together with the Trustees, backed up Whitefield in his plan to build, giving him permission to proceed and also a grant of 500 acres of land. He had already collected a "family" before the building was begun¹ and found no difficulty in filling his "Bethesda", as it was called. There is no doubt that he himself felt the financial burden of this venture. For a long time he was in debt and it kept him travelling on two continents to make collections for it. It was only in 1764 that he could say of the little colony with its chapel, living quarters, school and farm: "Peace and plenty reign at Bethesda. All things go on successfully." "Thanks be to God, all things are settled on this side of the water. The auditing of accounts and the foundation for a college have silenced enemies and comforted friends." ² During the years he had collected his charges from all over the world.³ Collecting for this scheme all his preaching life, Whitefield thus kept the ethical and practical side of religion before multitudes who had heard him calling them to have faith in Christ.

Many other causes engaged his sympathy. By 1756 the "Tabernacle" and the Tottenham Court Road Chapel were both complete. Within two years of finishing the Chapel, Whitefield's people had built twelve almshouses on the property for as many poor widows. He preached in both these buildings and collected £ 2,060 for the relief of the French-Protestants of Prussia, the German Protestants, and the sufferers in a great fire in Boston, America /

¹ Foundation stone laid 25 March, 1740

² Belcher, op.cit., pp 381, 382

³ Ibid, op.cit., p 349: "In March 1754, Whitefield, in company with twenty two poor destitute children, sailed the fifth time for America". (Gillies, op.cit., p 208)

America. His influence was so great that in 1763 at New York, although prejudices against the Indians ran high in view of a threatened insurrection in the North, he collected £120 at a service for "Dr. Wheelock's Indian School" in Connecticut.¹

As early as 1740 he desired to erect schools for negroes, the use of whom as slaves he nevertheless justified on the grounds of the climate and the working conditions of the Southern States. But even though he seems to have had a "blind spot" as to slaves,² using them himself on his Orphanage property, he was bold to speak to owners who maltreated them.³ He tells the Alleghany Indians, moreover, that "the Lord Jesus died for you, as well as for the White men amongst you."⁴

.....

In September 1769, Whitefield made his seventh and last voyage to America. Owing to much improved health on his arrival, he had hopes of doing a great deal more preaching than he had lately been accustomed to. His power over listeners was still as strong as ever. "So much company crowds that, together with my preaching every other day etc., I have scarce the least leisure." In 1770 he transferred the property and control of the Orphanage to trustees, desiring his name to be "annihilated", so that "they may accept the trust without expecting too much trouble or suffering contempt for being connected with him." He would have liked/

1 Belcher, op.cit., pp 94 f., 378 f.

2 See Maldwyn Edwards, "John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century", p 115

3 W.Wale, op.cit., pp 408, 418; Collected Works, vol.IV, p 35 ff. "A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina".

4 Collected Works, vol.I, p 174, letter of May 21, 1740.

liked to have settled at Bethesda, but in line with what he had often said - "no nestling, no nestling on this side of eternity"- he wrote at this time that "all must give way to Gospel-ranging."¹

He continued thus up to the day of his death, September 30th, 1770. Leaving Portsmouth, New Hampshire, for Boston on the 29th of this month, he preached at Exeter, fifteen miles distant.

"One remarked to him before going out to preach, 'Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach'. Whitefield remarked, 'True, sir'; then turning aside, he clasped his hands together and looking up, said, 'Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work, but not of Thy work. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal Thy truth, and come home and die.'" ²

There was the man as he had always been. He proceeded to the next township after this service, to Newburyport, where his last acts, which can be summed up in a few words, took place:

"While Whitefield partook of an early supper, the people assembled at the front of the parsonage, and even crowded into the hall, impatient to hear a few words from the man they so greatly loved. 'I am tired', said Whitefield, 'and must go to bed'. He took a candle and was hastening to his chamber. The sight of the people moved him; and pausing on the staircase, he began to speak to them. He had preached his last sermon; this was to be his last exhortation. There he stood, the crowd in the hall 'gazing up at him with tearful eyes, as Elisha at the ascending prophet. His voice flowed on until the candle which he held in his hand burned away and went out in its socket! The next morning he was not, for God had taken him.'" ³

B. /

¹ On completion of a place of worship for Whitefield in Philadelphia, he was offered £800 a year, if he would stay there for six months only of each year. He refused. - Gillies, op.cit., p 150

² Gledstone, op.cit., p 338

³ Tyerman, op.cit., vol. II, p 598.

B. The General Religious Situation in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century.

In 1738, when the Evangelical Revival may be said to have commenced in Britain, much of the very essence of Christianity, as at least all evangelical Christians conceive it, had passed out of the religious life. What all the Reformers and most earnest souls from the Reformation down to the time of the Commonwealth had understood and experienced, had apparently become unintelligible to most of the people who supposed themselves religious in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Some of the reasons for this state of religion may be easily seen. Nearly all had their origin in the previous century.

The Puritanism of the seventeenth century had by its very narrowness led to a strong reaction. At the Restoration, not only the political system of the Commonwealth was rejected but largely the Puritan religion also. The extraordinary number of queer sects and the extravagant fanaticism of the different parties tolerated by Cromwell laid religion also open to ridicule at the hands of dramatists and writers, and so the piety of true Puritanism was further discredited. It would be a long time before this prejudice died down.¹

In the realm of the theologians, the interest was passing from the Arminian v. Calvinist disputes. Dr. Crisp, for instance, had been the formulator of expressions of extreme Calvinism at the end of the century. He had gone so far as to say of the elect: "From/

¹ Cf. Tyerman, *op.cit.*, vol. I, p 288 (sermon of Mr. Wilder)

"From the time thy transgressions were laid upon Christ, thou ceaseest to be a transgressor to the last hour of thy life: so that now thou art not an idolator, thou art not a thief, thou art not a sinful person, whatsoever sin thou committest."¹

In a radical fashion, Richard Baxter (1615-1691) by his treatise "An Hundred Errors of Dr. Crisp Demonstrated", had helped to silence such extreme Calvinists for the meantime. Even Calvinists who were near-extremists such as Twisse and Rutherford, together with men like Matthew Henry, Ames, Owen and Daniel Williams, provided in their writings formulations softening the strictest Calvinistic doctrine, so that when the predestinarian controversy broke out again in 1770, the Arminian Methodist, John Fletcher, could draw on their statements for ammunition against the Hill brothers, Augustus Toplady, and the rest.

Following the generation of Calvinists of the Crispian and Twissian type, the interest once taken in the Divine decrees had given place to Deism and the question of natural and revealed religion. Long interesting discussions took place on such questions as to whether God could in any way reveal Himself to man, whether human reason had any assistance to grant or contribution to make to human faith, whether the authority on which religion was based was internal or external. Supernatural religion was attacked along these lines: (1) the improbability that a religion intended to be universal would be revealed to one obscure people and based upon uncertain historical evidence; (2) the doubtful character of the text of the Bible (supposedly inspired), which is full of divergent readings; (3) the unsatisfactory/

¹ A.W. Harrison, "Arminianism", p 210

unsatisfactory nature of the evidence from prophecy (seldom was there actual fulfilment), and from miracles (the witnesses cannot be cross-examined); (4) the moral difficulties of the Bible, especially the bribing of men to do good by hopes of future reward or punishment; (5) the sufficiency of natural religion. Man can shape his conduct aright without what has supposedly been revealed, even if it is wholly or partly true, which is doubtful.¹

"Out of these two forces of revolt" (the reaction to Puritanism, the growth of the scientific spirit with interest in the natural world) "Deism was evolved, which was an attempt to rationalize Christianity, to state it in a formula which all could accept, and by stripping it of what was regarded as its superstitious element, to make the natural rather than the supernatural the basis of belief. The authority which the Catholic found in the Church, and the Protestant in the Bible, was to be discarded in favour of the new authority of the Reason."²

It must be remembered that most of the Deists were Theists i.e. the Deism of the first half of the eighteenth century (the time of its maturity) did not deny the existence of a Divine Power in the Universe, but only such articles of belief as the Incarnation and the Atonement.

The decline of Deism in England came after 1750 : because it lacked constructive power, it could not raise interest in all with its coldness and intellectual character, and it contradicted experience (that there is in natural religion as it was expounded, both the clarity and certainty claimed for it, is plainly not true/

¹ A. Plummer, "The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century", p 90

Vide John Toland (1670-1722) "Christianity not Mysterious, Or, A Discourse showing that there is nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, nor above it, and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly called a Mystery"; Antony Collins (1676-1729) "Discourse of Freethinking", "Scheme of Literal Prophecy"; Thomas Woolston (1670-1733) Six "Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour"; Matthew Tindal (c 1653-1733) "Christianity as old as the Creation or The Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature". These provoked many replies, e.g. by Bentley, Swift, Chandler, Sherlock.

² James Burns, "Revivals, Their Laws and Leaders", p 266

true).¹

During the period under review, however, Butler with his "Analogy" (1736) and other philosophers of his stamp, such as Barkeley, defended religion on grounds that had never been used before. "While there was any doubt on these ultimate questions, it seemed a waste of time to rationalising theologians to be speculating on the number of the elect."² As the eighteenth century went on, the main body of religious thought, despite the energetic influence of the Calvinistic Methodists and the Evangelicals of the Established Church who retained their allegiance to Calvinism, tended to go further and further away from the influence of Geneva, so that it is not surprising to read that at the close of the century it was a frequent assumption that the stricter views of Calvinism on predestination had been outgrown.

It appears that the period during which religion generally was at its lowest ebb was from about 1720 to 1770. It was not until after the latter date that the full weight of the Revivalists' labours were felt throughout the whole land and beyond the seas in America. Right up to his death Whitefield speaks of breaking new ground.³ This period of fifty years included the early struggling time of Methodism as it sought to be established in a firm and organised way against a violent opposition of all evangelicalism - opposition through pulpit, press, and mob-rule methods.

The reaction to the excesses of the previous century and the nature of the Deistic controversies led to an undoubted lack of /

¹ Plummer, op.cit., p 100

² Harrison, op.cit., p 220

³ Letter, New York, July 29, 1770 - Collected Works, vol.III, p 424

of earnestness and zeal on the part of a large number of Church of England clergy.¹ Bishop Burnet said that the clergy were less influential and more despised than those of any Church in Europe for this reason and not because of scandalous behaviour.² The Established Church seems to have

"favoured a reasonable ethical religion that avoided emotionalism and looked constantly to human effort rather than to Divine grace as the chief influence in the way of salvation. It was said of Dr. George Benson's 'Reasonableness of the Christian religion as Delivered in the Scriptures' that the author, 'like the great majority of theologians in his day, was quite willing to allow any amount of spiritual influences in the first ages of Christianity, provided that not a breath of inspiration could come upon the Church now'. This may overstate rather the uninspired quality of the religion of the Established Church, but in so far as it stressed the human side of religion in requiring the constant endeavour after morality as the minimum requirement, its tendency may be called Arminian."³

Norman Sykes says that the generally held opinions about the clergy of the eighteenth century have to be revised in the light of the latest research which has used much newly discovered material such as diaries and church records.

"Notwithstanding the hard things said of the clergy of the eighteenth century, the personal records of Brockbank, Woodforde, Cole, and Skinner, present a not unpleasing picture of fidelity to duty according to the standards of the epoch, which embraced ministers of the devotion of Dr. Johnson's ideal parish priest, Prebendary Zachariah Mudge of St. Andrew's, Plymouth, and prebendary in Exeter Cathedral, and the typical characters of fiction, Parson Adams and the Vicar of Wakefield. In support of this testimony, the evidence gathered from visitation records has led to welcome signs of a sounder appreciation in recent years of the Hanoverian clergy. The verdict of Canon Ollard on the Visitation returns of Archbishop Herring at York in 1743 is that 'on the whole the strong impression left by the returns is that of a body of conscientious and dutiful men, trying to do their work according to the standard of their day.'" ⁴

Perhaps/

¹ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol.I, p 127

² Plummer, op.cit., p 18, but cf. Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit. vol. I, p 117

³ Harrison, op.cit., p 221

⁴ Sykes, op.cit., p 273 f.

Perhaps the last words quoted by Sykes, "according to the standard of their day", and his own words before, "according to the standards of the epoch", are revealing of just that situation in the Established Church of which the Revivalists complained. It should be noted also that the records of the men referred to above on which Sykes builds so much of his conclusions throughout his book, all fall within the time following 1760 except for one, the diary of Brockbank.

Although one may grant that there were no doubt numbers of the clergy who worked sincerely and diligently during long pastorates in obscure country parishes, the generality suffered from the rationalising influences and the general circumstances of the age. They were careless of their work in the parishes, putting a low estimate upon the ministerial office, slack in visiting and catechising their flocks. Some bishops never visited their dioceses for as long as a year.¹ Many men enjoyed the financial benefits of pluralities and not a few added to this the fault of absenteeism, not revealing the slightest interest in their parishioners.² Conditions in the ministry are revealed in the cases of men who, having been ordained, after many years were "converted". G.R. Balleine speaks of Walker of Truro and Scott of Olney:

"Samuel Walker had comethere (Truro at that time was a gay and frivolous little town) as curate (1746) in order to be near the assembly rooms, for he was passionately fond of card-playing and dancing. A member of an old West Country family, well-read and courtly, with handsome person, charming manners, and brilliant conversational powers, eloquent in the pulpit, orthodox in /

¹ Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor, never entered his see for six years of office, Plummer, op.cit., p 69

² Ibid, p 85. Also Sykes, op.cit., pp 150, 217; Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol. I, pp 119, 271

in doctrine, but without a spark of any spiritual religion, he seemed to be settling down to the life of a fashionable Abbé.... His rector was an absentee, who left him a free hand so long as he forwarded half the pew-rents, fees and offerings punctually."¹

Thomas Scott was curate of two villages in the neighbourhood of Olney before he succeeded to the latter parish in 1781. He

"at last succeeded in obtaining ordination. His motives as he describes them were not very high - 'a desire of a more comfortable way of procuring a livelihood, the expectation of more leisure to employ in reading, and a vainglorious imagination that I should sometime distinguish myself in the literary world.' Like many self-educated men he had a high opinion of his own intellect, and at this time he held strongly Unitarian views, which, so lax had the discipline of the Church become, he did not consider any difficulty in the way of ordination. 'After having concealed my real sentiments under the mask of general expressions, after having subscribed articles directly contrary to what I believed, after having declared in the most solemn manner possible that I engaged myself to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, not believing that there was any Holy Ghost, on September 20, 1772, I was ordained deacon!'"²

One wonders whether the following case as late as 1789 would have been exceptional or a common state of affairs in the earlier part of the century. When on a visit to Hannah More in Somerset during that year, Wilberforce went among the mining villages in the Mendip Hills. He was horrified.

"The poverty, the depravity, the degradation had made his blood run cold. The Vicar of Cheddar lived at Oxford; the curate lived at Wells; the thirteen adjacent parishes were without a resident curate; the only clergyman in the district was the Vicar of Oxbridge, of whom Hannah More wrote, 'He is intoxicated about six times a week, and very frequently is prevented from preaching by two black eyes honestly earned by fighting.'"³

The hunting, drinking, gambling, swearing parson was apparently common enough.⁴ George Whitefield speaks of one who would not travel on a ferry across to Wales with him because he was/

¹ Balleine, "A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England", p 94

² Ibid, p 113 f.

³ Ibid, p 154

⁴ Townsend, Workman, Bayrs, op.cit., vol. I, p 118

was an "enthusiastic" Dissenter, but whom Whitefield saw later at the Inn "shaking his elbows over a gambling table".¹ Also Whitefield once answered the charge of holding services in unconsecrated buildings and thus breaking the Canons, by the counter-charge that many of the other clergy broke the Canon against "frequenting taverns and playing cards."² Some of the condemnations of the Church, apart from those later of the Revivalists, were scathing. Even Archbishop Leighton called the Church "a fair carcass without spirit, excellent in doctrine and worship, but most corrupt in its administration."³

Most of the sermons of the times were little more than moral discourses.⁴ Harrison says that

"the Whig and Latitudinarian theologians of the eighteenth century were restless under the pressure of the XXXIX Articles."⁵

The probable result of this in preaching is borne out by one of Whitefield's constantly repeated charges against his fellow-clergy that "they did not preach up the Articles and Homilies of the good old Church of England".

To obtain an idea of the type of religion and piety which was characteristic of the period one has only to read through the anonymous publication, "The Whole Duty of Man". After it sprang into prominence following the Restoration, this book was chained in churches for people to read and was the basis for instruction in Charity schools.

"It was written at the height of the reaction against the Puritan theology, and its author tries to reduce religion to its most prosaic elements. Everything emotional, everything speculative, all passionate yearnings after holiness and communion with/

¹ W.Wale, op.cit., p 221

² Ibid, p 212. Cf. Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol. I, p 118

³ Plummer, op.cit., p 18

⁴ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol. I, p 132

⁵ Op. cit., p 221. Cf. Bangorian controversy, Plummer, op.cit., p 70

with the Unseen, are relentlessly excluded as delusions. Every sensible person, we are told, ought to take care of his soul, for it is the most durable part of him, but to do so he must 'act by the same rules of common reason, whereby he proceeds in his worldly business.' He must go to Church, pay his tithes, keep the fasts, avoid drunkenness, and seek to do his duty as a neighbour, a master and a son. Whitefield may be pardoned when he said that its author knew no more about Christianity than Mahommed."¹

What about the Dissenting Churches? That these Churches, Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist, were not, at the Restoration, "at variance with the victorious portion of the Church on the score of doctrine, may be seen from the statement of Richard Baxter in 1660: 'We humbly acquaint your Majesty that we do not dissent from the doctrine of the Church of England expressed in the Articles and Homilies, but it is the controverted passages about government, liturgy, and ceremonies, and some by-passages and phrases in the doctrinal part which is scrupled by those whose liberty is desired.'" ² But toleration was not to come then, and Dissent suffered much under the familiar code of the last Stuarts. The reign of William III, however, saw the consolidation of Dissent. The neglected Halls of City Companies, both in London and in the provinces, had become available for Dissenting worship. The Nonconformist ministry was trained either abroad, preferably in Holland, or at home, in the Dissenting Academies. During this reign, Unitarianism which was to affect both the Established Church and the Dissenters in varying degrees so much in the following century, grew and spread. The title of "the Father of English Unitarianism" is usually given to John Biddle (1616-1662).
"Biddle's /

1 Balleine, op.cit., p 74. Cf. Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 363 (footnote) for Whitefield's publication against this book.

2 Duncan Coomer, "English Dissent under the Early Hanoverians", p 3.

"Biddle's catechism shows distinct Socinian influence in the views that Christ as man was taken up into heaven to be instructed for His prophetic office, that God's love was universal, and that Christ died to reconcile man to God, not God to man. But Biddle did not adopt the Socinian practice of prayer to Christ." ¹

The death of Biddle in 1662 and the Act of Uniformity (1661) checked the movement as an organisation for worship, but it continued as a mode of thought. The Act of Toleration (1689) had excluded all that denied the Trinity. In 1690, Arthur Bury published his work, "The Naked Gospel", in which he rejected the Trinitarian doctrine as a later "addition". This started the Trinitarian Controversy. By this time the Unitarian position was so strong "that Parliament found it necessary (1698) to threaten the profession of the obnoxious heresy with cumulative penalties amounting to the loss of all civil rights, and three years' imprisonment".² When George I came to the throne in 1714, a Trinitarian controversy broke out again. The result was a considerable impetus given to the spread of Unitarianism, especially among the Presbyterians. "In less than half a century the doctrines of the great founders of Presbyterianism could scarcely be heard from any Presbyterian pulpit in England."³ The denominations will be considered in turn.

The organisation of the Presbyterian Church became very slack and allowed for no checks on the introduction of heterodox doctrine.⁴ Thus Socinianism and Arianism were gradually introduced into the pulpits, the only body who could interfere being the Government, and in the eighteenth century it was not very interested /

¹ J.E.Carpenter, "Unitarianism, an Historic Survey", p 22 f.

² Ibid, p 24

³ Plummer, op.cit., p 67

⁴ Coomer, op.cit., p 12

-ested. It should be said that the Presbyterian ministry was generally of a higher academic standard than the rest of Dissent. Among the laity of the Presbyterians, and in all Dissent generally, were many very wealthy men and men influential in commercial circles, and men of high social standing.

In the Independent or "gathered" Churches, controlled by "Church covenants", the doctrine adhered to in these "covenants" has throughout the Calvinist conception of the Divine Sovereignty, though in some cases, the "decrees" are not emphasised. With the strong background of the "covenant", Independent congregations were able to

"withstand all the assaults which the forces of Deism and Arianism were able to exert against them. Mere Independency, or ecclesiastical democracy, would not have sustained them, as we can judge when we look at America, where a little later, the Unitarian movement engulfed the Independency of New England with comparatively little effect on the Presbyterians - a reversal of the course of English history." ¹

When turning to the Baptists, one is confronted with a greater zeal than in the other two branches of Dissent - zeal especially for work amongst the poor. Coomer says: "In fact there is much in the zeal of the Baptists, coupled with a distinct resemblance in some points of organisation, which remind us of the Methodists." ² Doctrinally, they were divided. The Particular Baptists, the larger body, were Calvinists who believed in the particular redemption of Christ, only efficacious for the elect, while the General Baptists held to a general or universal redemption.

"It is best to consider the Particular Baptists as that portion of the English Calvinist separatists who had been led to the belief that believers' baptism was the only Scriptural mode. This /

¹ Coomer, op.cit., p 19

² Ibid, p 20

This belief was quite incompatible with support of a national church and ranged them against Presbyterians on such an issue. At the same time it strengthened their doctrinal orthodoxy, by emphasising the solemn nature of the confession of faith. On the other hand the General Baptists represented a separate movement which had close associations with Holland, and had been much influenced by the Arminian minority of the Synod of Dort in 1619."¹

The influence of these latter Baptists during this half-century before 1750 was very small. They had been split into two in 1708 and went into a decline, after a controversy started by the anti-Trinitarian views of a farmer, Matthew Caffin. A few Particular Baptists(clergy) went over to Arianism but the General section went over almost in a body.

As regards the Sacraments, in all three denominations the Lord's Supper had a very high place. "They were nearer to the Reformation and faithfully followed the teaching of John Calvin. In fact it may be doubted whether their beliefs in this respect were different from those prevalent in the Church of England." It was on the ceremonial and the administration of the Sacrament that the differences arose.² Presbyterians , when Unitarianism grew, tended to Zwinglian views. They observed it only once a quarter but the other two denominations observed it more frequently. Fasting was a regular custom with many churches of Dissent. As to the life of the ministry, many were quite well off financially. They succeeded in keeping alive some semblance of the old Puritanism, speaking generally. Their lives in most cases were "marked with a devotion to duty, even though no spectacular success followed on their well-reasoned but matter-of-fact sermons."³

Thus/

¹ Coomer, op.cit., p 22

² Ibid, p 43

³ Ibid, p 48

Thus the doctrine of Dissent contained: (1) Calvinism, (Thirty Nine Articles and Westminster Confession of Faith, with belief in the plenary inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture) in the ranks of the Independents, Particular Baptists and older Presbyterians. Until later in the eighteenth century, only in the Arminian or General Baptists was there definite disbelief in predestination. "This Calvinism retained its hold on the main body of Dissent for many a year to come, for it was strongly reinforced by Whitefield and the Anglican Evangelicals";

(2) Arminianism, which had come through the General Baptists and among the Anglo-Catholic section of the Church of England (Caroline divines such as Laud). Moderate Puritans had been influenced by the teaching, especially among the Presbyterians led by Richard Baxter and John Goodwin. The followers of this semi-Arminianism were known as "Baxterians" and opposed the Calvinists. (Doddridge, for example, was a Baxterian). It was not from Baxter but from Laud and the Carolines that John Wesley derived his Arminianism; (3) Arianism, chiefly of the intellectual sections and not of the common people. This was a rejection of Calvinism even greater than that made by Baxterians. It was an attempt to commend religion to men of reason and science.

"It may be said that in the period with which we deal, Arian doctrine on the person of our Lord was that He was pre-existent to the creation of the world and was the Divine agent in creation and atonement, but was subordinate to the Father and did not partake of His essential Godhead. Along with the question of the personality of Christ, there was on the part of the Arians a denial of the doctrines of original sin and the atonement.

Socinians declared their belief in the Virgin Birth and in the Resurrection, but without the pre-existence of Christ, and without His possessing any but a human nature." ¹

"Unitarian"

¹ Coomer, op.cit., p 65 f.

"Unitarian" was little used as a title in the early part of the century, "but it may be taken to mean those Socinians who rejected all belief in the miraculous in Christianity, while retaining their belief in the Divinely inspired teaching of Jesus Christ."

"In popular parlance the name Presbyterian came in the end to mean all three - Arian, Socinian, Unitarian." ¹

Coomer gives the following interesting figures revealing the influence of these "new" theological developments:

"In 1730, in the London area: of 48 Presbyterian churches 19 were Calvinist, 12 Baxterian, 13 Arminian. The 28 Independent churches were all Calvinist. Of Particular Baptists, 7 were Calvinist, 9 Antinomian; and of General Baptists, 5 were Arminian and 3 Socinian, the term Arminian denoting at this time, an Arian tendency, "for we are not to think of it in its later Methodist, orthodox sense.'" ²

"In England", wrote Montesquieu, when he visited that country, "there is no religion, and the subject, if mentioned in Society, excites nothing but laughter".³ Addison declared that there was "less appearance of religion in England than in any neighbouring state, Catholic or Protestant. When our nation is overflowed with such a deluge of impiety, it must be a great pleasure to find any expedient take place, that has a tendency to recover it out of so dismal a condition."⁴ Samuel Butler said in the advertisement prefixed to his "Analogy" (1736): "It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is not so much a subject for enquiry but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious." Apart from the fact that this state of affairs was due largely to the developments in church doctrine and life outlined/

¹ Coomer, op.cit., p 67

² Ibid, p 78

³ "Oevres de Montesquieu", p 340

⁴ J. Addison, "Freeholder" (no.37), pp 214,217

outlined above, were there any contributing factors to be found in the circumstances of the secular aspects of the age? One of the contributing factors in the decline of religion was undoubtedly the policy and example of some of the leading figures in the State.

"The policy of Walpole which rarely showed any favour to either the English Church or religion in general, and was frequently antagonistic to both, the tastes and characters of the first two Goerges, and even the well-meant but eccentric efforts of Queen Caroline on behalf of religion, had a chilling effect upon the development of the national Church; and this just at a time when there was need of a mighty development of all the Church's best powers in order to keep pace with the nation's developments in population, in commerce, and in a multitude of those activities which are likely to materialise men's minds and deaden them to all spiritual influences." ¹

As to personal life, Balleine says: "The King, the Prime Minister, and the Prince of Wales were all living in open adultery."² Vice indeed seems to have been flourishing, especially in cities like London. "Like other great capitals, London threatened England with a moral taint. There, and perhaps there only, the profligate could live in large groups without much fear from the rest of the community." There were riots and mob-rule. But

"in actual fact Society in 1715 was in graver peril from vice than from riot and here again London was to blame.....The days indeed were approaching when it could be said that society was one vast casino and that the classic age of adultery had dawned in Britain.. This moral decline may have been due to luxury.....The new age however was in very real peril from strong drink.....Gin (chiefly, but other liquors also) debauched the uncontrolled masses. Within thirty years the output of British spirits had been multiplied fourfold." From 1715 on, the supply had doubled almost in twelve years. "A nation in which respectable tradesmen, as at Lichfield, got drunk every day must reform itself or perish."³

The/

¹ Plummer, op.cit., p 73

² Op. cit., p 14

³ W.F. Reddaway, "A History of Europe 1715-1814", p 18 f.

The South Sea Bubble with its consequent ruin for so many and its production of the feeling of instability may also have affected the tone of the age and, as a result, religion.

Were there any vital forces in religion at this time which were later to play a part in the Evangelical Revival? There was first the force of the "Religious Societies", in both the Church of England and Dissent. They dated from the reign of Charles II and developed considerably in William III's time, under the inspiration of Beveridge and Horneck. At the beginning of the eighteenth century there could be found nearly a hundred of these Societies in London and Westminster alone. Amongst their objects were these: "to love one another; when reviled, not to revile again; to wrong no man; to pray if possible seven times a day; to keep close to the Church of England." (This last was in the case of those in the Established Church)¹. Another agency for piety and zeal arising out of these were the "Societies for the Reformation of Manners", in which Churchmen and Dissenters alike tried to introduce legislation to put down vice.

In 1698 and 1701 respectively, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had been formed under the leadership of Dr. Bray. The former was limited mostly to Great Britain and the latter to "Plantations, Colonies, and Factories, beyond the Seas". The SPCK circulated Bibles, Prayer-books, and religious tracts. It also promoted charity schools, sustained missions in India, and opened out Georgia as a home for the persecuted Protestants of Salzburg.

In /

¹ Plummer, op.cit., p 21

In 1710 there was an admirable scheme to build fifty new churches in London. Although in the end only twelve were completed, these constituted an asset to the Church's work in the metropolis in the future.

Influencing the life and the religious thought of the time were the mysticism and pietism derived from the Continent and still alive in England in such bodies as the French Churches and the Moravian Brethren. The doctrine and practice of the latter affected Dissent wherever they met and the impact later on men like John and Charles Wesley is common knowledge.¹

It can be said in addition that in Scotland, in Wales, and in America, there were signs of a return to a stricter orthodoxy as a reaction to the latitudinarianism largely prevalent. Seceding from the National Church of Scotland on a question of polity (patronage and call), a number of ministers led by Ebenezer Erskine and growing by 1737 into a party of eight, formed themselves into the "Associate Presbytery". This body soon became distinguished from the Church on other matters than church government. In contrast to the "Moderates", who mixed with the world of Society, played cards, danced, etc, they "never put off the clergyman". In their preaching they were rigidly Calvinistic, concentrating on election, irresistible grace, and justification by faith. The Moderates kept out of view the peculiar principles of Calvinism and insisted mainly on the keeping of the commandments. This "Associate Presbytery" was the door by which/

¹ Henry Bett, "The Spirit of Methodism", chapter II ("Methodism and the Past"), where he traces and estimates the influence on Methodism of Reformers, Pietism, Moravians, Mystics, through literature, religious Societies etc.

which Whitefield entered Scotland when he had become a Calvinist himself. In Wales, Whitefield later found the work of Howell Harris and others was a preparation for his preaching. "Wales is excellently well prepared for the Gospel of Christ. They have many burning and shining lights, both among the Dissenting and Church ministers, amongst whom Mr. Griffith Jones shines in particular."¹ In America, "so early as 1734, a very wonderful revival took place in Northampton, New England, under the ministry of the celebrated Jonathan Edwards, a man of deep thought and guarded language, and not at all likely to be either himself carried away with strong feelings, or to be the instrument of mere excitement among others."² But "there was scarcely a single person in the town of Northampton, either young or old, that was left unconcerned about the things of the eternal world.....The town seemed to be full of the presence of God."³ The movement spread to other towns, and the effects were as great as in Northampton, where Edwards reckoned that three hundred were converted. Into this field, Whitefield entered some five years later, and some consider that it was Edwards' influence which caused him to become a Calvinist; but it is the opinion of most that the Erskine brothers of Scotland had the larger share in this, prior to Whitefield's meeting the New England minister.

.....

It was into the midst of such a religious situation as has been briefly sketched above that George Whitefield was born in the year 1714. It was not until practically the end of this period that he made his great impact as the first preacher of the Evangelical Revival.

¹ ~~W~~Wale, op.cit., p 225

² MacFarlan, op.cit., p 14

³ J. Edwards, "Narrative of late Surprising Conversions in N.E." (1737) - see his "Works", vol. I, p 34 8

CHAPTER TWO

DOCTRINE OF GOD AND HIS REVELATION

A. Introduction - Full Doctrine of the Trinity

Maintained - Attributes of God (Creation,
Providence, Goodness and Grace, Justice, Holiness)

To Whitefield, God is both Creator and Redeemer, but looking at his theology as a whole, one cannot but be impressed by the great stress he places upon God as Redeemer through Christ His Son. In true Calvinistic style, Christ is preached predominantly as the sole Mediator between God and man. The oft-repeated call is to come to Jesus Christ; but that coming is in order to obtain salvation in accordance with the sovereign will and grace of God. It is always by God's electing grace that men are saved. This emphasis on redemption is of course only natural in an evangelical preacher, but in this connection it is noted that whenever it is relevant, the full doctrine of the Trinity is stressed - in face of the growing Unitarianism of the day. In addition and for the same reason, a greater weight was given to Christ's Divinity than to His humanity, so that by this means, His Mediatorial work might be demonstrated as absolutely efficacious. Consequently in referring to the Godhead, Whitefield was always careful to maintain a credal and logical relationship between the three persons of the Trinity.

The first person of the Trinity is the Father. References to the Father are made, generally speaking, in order to set forth in/

in a clearer light the person and work of Christ, by Whom God's revelation to man and relations with man are governed. But God's Fatherly goodness and love would never have been questioned. In life and experience, Whitefield shows us that, like Calvin, he "was a true child of God, whose love was the light and soul of his life".¹

Salvation through Christ comes from the Father. He says: "I would point out to you the fountain from which all those blessings flow, that the elect partake of in Jesus, 'Who of God is made unto us'(1 Cor.1:30); the Father, He it is who is spoken of here. Not as though Jesus Christ was not God also; but God the Father is the fountain of the Deity; and if we consider Jesus Christ as Mediator, God the Father is greater than He." God the Father takes the initiative.

The Father is the One to Whom Christ, His Son and the Messiah, offers His meritorious work on behalf of man in fulfilment of the Covenant made from all eternity between the Father and the Son, but only operative upon the Fall of Adam.

"There was an eternal contract between the Father and the Son: 'I have made a covenant with my chosen and I have sworn unto David, my servant'; now David was a type of Christ, with whom the Father made a covenant, that if He would obey and suffer, and make Himself a sacrifice for sin, He should 'see his seed, he should prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands'".²

Thus to Whitefield, Christ as Mediator is subordinate to the Father.

All truly converted souls are children of the Father in Whitefield's estimation, and are called upon to act as such in response to His love.³

Christ/

¹ Hunter, "The Teaching of Calvin", p 45; cf. W.Wale, op.cit., pp 423, 428, and Sermons, p 483.
² Sermons, p 453. Cf. pp 9, 403, 407, 455
³ Ibid, p 237 f

Christ, God Incarnate, returned to the Father at the Ascension: "When our Lord was about to ascend to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God, He gave His apostles this commission, 'Go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'" Here the Trinity is explicitly recognised as such, especially as Whitefield goes on to show that "name" signifies "nature", i.e., baptism is "into the nature of the Father", etc.¹ On this particular point Whitefield was challenged by some Presbyterians in America, but in his reply he held to his statement.²

Jesus Christ ("who is God-man"³) is the second person in the Trinity, named in the baptismal formula and the closing prayer or benediction.⁴ He is the "Son of God"; the "Mediator"; the "Christ"(Messiah); our "High-Priest"; the "Son of Man"; co-equal, co-essential, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father in his Godhead; the pre-existent, creating and eternal "Word"; the "Saviour", "Redeemer" and "Friend"; the Giver of the Holy Spirit; Judge of all men.⁵

The Holy Ghost is He by Whom

"is plainly signified the Holy Spirit, the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity, consubstantial and co-eternal with the Son, proceeding from yet equal to them both. He is emphatically called Holy because infinitely holy in Himself and the author and finisher of all holiness in us. This blessed Spirit, who once moved on the face of the great deep, who overshadowed the blessed Virgin before that holy Child was born of her, who descended in a bodily shape like a dove on our blessed Lord when He came up out of the water at His baptism, and afterwards came down in fiery tongues on the heads of all His apostles at the day of Pentecost - this is the Holy Ghost, who must move on the faces of our souls. This power of the Most High must come upon us and we must be baptised with His baptism and refining fire, before we/

¹ Sermons, pp 389, 608

² Collected Works, vol.IV, p 47

³ Sermons, p 518

⁴ Ibid, pp 389, 422

⁵ See p 59 ff. infra for "Person of Christ"

we can be styled true members of Christ's mystical body."¹

The Holy Spirit is the agent of the miracle of regeneration and of other extraordinary operations; but "such as working of miracles or speaking with divers kinds of tongues, they are long ceased."² This sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost may be perceived by the regenerate. It was on this issue that Whitefield and his fellow Methodists received much opposition. Apart from numbers of lesser persons attacking them on the grounds of "enthusiastic pretences", the almost friendly Bishop of Gloucester (who had ordained Whitefield at an unusually early age) and the able Dr. Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, took Whitefield to task. The former questioned the authority Whitefield had to preach as an itinerant, and enclosed a sermon by a Dr. Stebbing to which he drew Whitefield's attention and to which he presumably gave his hearty approval. In his reply to Bishop Benson, Whitefield says:

"If we do"(use the word 'sensible' in connection with the Holy Spirit's operations), "we do not mean that God's Spirit manifests Itself to our senses as really as any sensible impression made upon the body. But to disprove this, the Doctor (Stebbing) quotes our Lord's allusion to the wind in the third chapter of St. John, which is one of the best texts he could urge to prove it. For if the analogy of our Lord's discourse be carried on, we shall find that it amounts to thus much: that although the operations of the Spirit of God can no more be accounted for than how the wind cometh or goeth; yet they may be as easily felt by the soul as the wind is felt by the body. But, says the Doctor, 'These men have no proof to offer for their inward manifestations'. What proof, my Lord, does the Doctor require? Would he have us raise dead bodies? Have we not done greater things than these? I speak with all humility. Has not God by our ministry raised many dead souls to a spiritual life? Verily if men will not believe the evidence God has given us that He sent us, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead."³

In his reply to the Bishop of London, Whitefield goes further. Disclaiming the possibility of "extraordinary" operations as/

1 Sermons, p 435. Cf. pp 145, 387, 389, 412, 413

2 Ibid, p 145

3 Wale, op.cit., p 296 f

as mentioned above, Whitefield agrees with the Bishop that he is an "enthusiast" if such are defined as those having "a strong persuasion on the mind that they are guided in an extraordinary manner by the immediate impulses and impressions of the Spirit of God". But he says that the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, which include guidance in this manner, are discernible to the subject, the Christian, even though they are not evident to others in the form of "fruits". "The ordinary gifts, however real and certain in themselves, are no otherwise discernible, than by their fruits and effects", said the Bishop, to which Whitefield replied, "Had your Lordship said, 'No otherwise discernible to others than by their fruits and effects,' it would have been right; but if your Lordship means they are no otherwise discernible to ourselves, it is wrong; for it is possible, my Lord, for a person to feel and discern these ordinary gifts and influences of the Spirit in himself, when there is no opportunity of discovering them to others."¹ Because of this emphasis on the Spirit, Whitefield and his colleagues were branded as "antinomians", "enthusiastic madmen", etc., all their lives - in fact they were classed with all the extremist sects that have appeared in history claiming direct inspiration. In some respects, due to loose and unguarded expressions, e.g. in Whitefield's early writings, they deserved much of the suspicion they received, and although Whitefield considers that he is careful to state that the Holy Spirit's operations may be sensibly experienced, but not on the level of the ordinary senses, yet in the extracts above and especially in the words, "as easily felt by the soul as the wind is felt by the body", he is coming very close himself to a primitive doctrine of/

¹ Collected Works, vol.IV, p 8 ff

of direct plenary inspiration. It must be conceded that he and his supporters adopted a very balanced view in practice. In the chief centres of revival in Britain and America, they were careful to investigate fully all cases of conversion where the coming of the Spirit was accompanied by extraordinary physical symptoms. Their tests of genuineness were mainly: could the subject give a coherent, rational, and Scriptural account of the great spiritual change in his life? and was the work of conversion lasting in time and shown in fruits of holy living? ¹ Nevertheless, Whitefield was ready on many occasions to identify the Spirit's work with the physical effects of his preaching - the groans and cries, the faintings and trances. As the trained orator he was ever quick to perceive the beginnings of the "melting-down" of his auditory, when he considered that the Spirit was making the Word effective in men's hearts.

His doctrine of the Holy Spirit led to charges of antinomianism. The reply was that, in actual fact, the way in which the Spirit was known to the believer was directly opposed to such a heresy. For, His work can be observed in the soul to a large extent in that He convinces a man of "sin" ("original" sin, "actual" sin, the sin of "our duties", the sin of "unbelief" -see p 131 ff infra), of "righteousness"(that the merits of Christ's imputed righteousness are alone sufficient for salvation), and of "judgment"(that Christ alone justifies, bringing acquittal of the guilty subject, and peace).² In the sermon, "Marks of Having Received the Holy Ghost"(preached after 1740) four out of the five/

¹ See "Eighteenth Century Revivals and their Leaders", for New England and Cambuslang Revivals.

² Sermons, p 413 ff

five Scriptural "marks" are ethical: complete dependence on God "in prayer and supplication", "not committing sin" ("for how shall he that is dead to sin, as every converted person is, live any longer therein?"), "our conquest over the world", "our loving one another" in the fellowship, and "loving our enemies".¹

Finally the Spirit is the inspirer of a man's thoughts, words, and actions²; the illuminator of Scripture and doctrine³; the purifier of the soul⁴; and the source of joy.⁵ He is not to be identified with the light of conscience as with the Quakers. Whitefield held that the objective work of Christ is the basis of all the inward communications of God's Holy Spirit.⁶

This doctrine has been treated herein at some length because of the importance it has for one of the leading Methodist emphases, namely, the doctrine of Christian Assurance,⁷ and because of the controversy it caused in all theological circles.⁸

.....

God is the Creator of the world and of men. Whitefield says: "He who before by His almighty fiat spake the world into being, breathed into man the breath of spiritual life." ⁹ Of course/

¹ Sermons, p 437 ff. Cf. p 594 (preached about 25 years later)

² W.Wale, op.cit., pp 41,44, 61, 187, etc.

³ Ibid, pp 53,114; Sermons, pp 383 f

⁴ W.Wale, op.cit., p 48

⁵ Ibid, p 188; Sermons, p 226 f

⁶ W.Wale, op.cit., p 331

⁷ Referred to again, infra, p 98 ff

⁸ Vide the Pamphlets written as replies by Whitefield and contained in his Collected Works, vol.IV, pp 113-124, 160 f,173-202, 229-252, 285-304. Cf. as an example of an opponent's writing, "The State of Religion in New England since the Rev. George Whitefield was there. In a letter from a Gentleman in New England to His Friend in Glasgow, with an Appendix Containing Proof of the Principal Facts", etc.(Glasgow,1742),pp 28 f and 36 etc.

⁹ Sermons, p 436

course, Christ as God's Son is also the one by whom all things are made:

"When Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word, was pleased to make all things by the word of His power, His last works were best. When He looked back upon and beheld the first products of His almighty power, He pronounced them 'good'; but when at last that lovely creature, man, was formed, He pronounced them 'very good'".¹

But most of the references to the power behind all creation, particularly man's beginnings, are to God the Father.² The earlier "Journals" are also full of God's power being revealed in Nature. Whitefield in his travels admires "God's wonders in the deep"³, the starry heavens, the mountains set fast by His power, and the control He has over the winds.⁴

Just before the American rebellion broke out, Benjamin Franklin, Whitefield's friend and publisher for many years in that part of the world, wrote to the preacher:

"I see with you that our affairs are not well managed by our rulers here below; I wish that I could believe with you, that they are well attended to by those above; I rather suspect, from certain circumstances, that though the general government of the Universe is well administered, our particular little affairs are perhaps below notice, and left to take the chance of human prudence or imprudence, as either may happen to be uppermost. It is, however, an uncomfortable thought and I leave it."

Whitefield, true to his life-long beliefs, was swift to endorse the latter: "Uncomfortable indeed! and, blessed be God, unscriptural; for we are fully assured that 'the Lord reigneth', and are directed to cast all our care on Him, because He careth for us."⁵ Right from his early days Whitefield could see the hand of God over-ruling people, things and the events of this world./

¹ Sermons, p 395

² Cf. Ibid, pp 136, 464 f

³ Wale, op.cit., p 99

⁴ Ibid, pp 118, 143, 173, 452; cf. p 167

⁵ Belcher, op.cit., p 415

world. Especially does He over-rule for the good of the "elect", providing all that is necessary, both material and spiritual, for their use and blessing. Two of his first published writings (autobiographical) have many references to the Providence of God, some very naively stated. Such a reference in the "Short Account" (written 1739, published 1740) he edits severely when in 1756 he put out a new printing. The omissions are the details only, for he still does not deny the principle upon which he acted and continued to act all his life respecting his material necessities:

"According to His abundant mercy, He also raised me up some temporal supplies. (For some considerable time I had followed the example of Professor Francke, and whenever I wanted any worldly assistance, pleaded the Scripture promises for the things of this life as well as that which is to come, in the name of Jesus Christ. This is still my practice and I never yet failed of success. When I came from Oxford on account of my sickness..... I owed I think about £ 12 or £ 13, and when I went to Bristol, I was so poor that I was obliged to borrow money of my kind hostess, Mrs. H---- with whom I lodged at Gloucester, to bear my expenses on the road. This I bless God did not dishearten me; but I continued pleading the promises in the name of Christ, and soon after my coming to Bristol, I received an answer. For a brother of mine coming from sea, God inclined him to give me four guineas and some other necessities. And when I returned to Gloucester.....¹), those I expected should assist me did not, but persons I never spoke to and who, I thought, were my enemies, were raised up to supply my wants, and thereby helped to fulfil that promise which I always pleaded, 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.'" ²

This attitude of absolute dependence upon God was very important for the manner in which it was reflected in all his subsequent work, particularly in his philanthropic project of the Georgia Orphan House, and in his reactions to sufferings and trials of every kind. The full title of the first section of his autobiography ("A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Rev. George/

¹ The portion in parentheses was omitted in the 1756 edition.

Cf. elsewhere in Whale, op.cit., p 57 f

² Wale, op.cit., p 52. Cf. p 35

George Whitefield"), and the hymn printed at the close of it, indicate his consistent attitude throughout.¹ God, whose will was supreme, to Whitefield's way of thinking, always knew what was best for him, or for other of His servants, or for His work.²

Whitefield distinguished between God's "general" and "particular" providence: "O that I might watch God's particular providence more and more!" he said. "It comforts and builds up my soul. How unhappy they must be who exclude it from the world. To live without a sense of God's particular providence is in effect to live without God in the world. From a such a state Good Lord deliver me!"³ In this he was very much in agreement with John Wesley who had been affected by the memory of his escape from a burning house when a lad, and who practised sortilege nearly all his life, when Whitefield had long ceased to put his trust in it.⁴

At the same time Whitefield maintained a balance between lack of confidence and foolhardiness. "Lord, grant that we may always keep between the two extremes of distrusting or tempting Thee."⁵

God's mercy and goodness to men were invariably the result of God's grace of which Whitefield was at all times vividly aware. "O the sovereign, distinguishing fullness of God's grace. If it were not for the consideration of that, my soul must be continually pierced through and through with many sorrows," he exclaims when he is "somewhat cast down".⁶ It is God's goodness and grace which is revealed/

1 ~~W~~Wale, op.cit., p 63. Cf. p 61

2 Ibid, pp 170, 172, 258, 452; Sermons, p 156

3 Ibid, p 338. Cf. pp 258 and 61: "Thus God dealt with my soul."etc

4 J.H. Overton, "The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century", pp 10,19

5 Wale, op.cit., p 366

6 Ibid, p 477



revealed in any good which others can see in himself:

"Adored be His unmerited goodness, I find His grace quickening me more and more every day. My understanding is more and more enlightened, my affections more inflamed, and my heart full of love toward God and man.....¹ For whatever degrees of goodness there may be in us more than in others, it is owing to God's restraining, preventing, and assisting grace.....We are wholly indebted to free grace for all."²

The adjectives applied to grace may be noted: "sovereign", "distinguishing", "free", "restraining", "preventing". It is "free and sovereign" because salvation is always "the free gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord"; "free", from both God's and man's standpoints because God is a "sovereign agent, and therefore may hold salvation from or confer it on whom He pleaseth; and because there is nothing to be found in man, that can in any way induce God to be merciful to him."³ A couplet which he quotes again and again in his letters is:

"Surely, O God, Thy grace is free,
For, O my God, it found out ME!"⁴

God's grace is "distinguishing" because it calls the elect who have been chosen by God, and also because it separates them from those who know not God.⁵ It is also "restraining" because "if it were not for this, God's people would be just as weak and wicked as other folks are."⁶ Grace may be also described as "convicting", "converting", "establishing", and "comforting".⁷

As has been seen, the power and richness of God's grace have been revealed in Christ. Whitefield says: "But all things are possible/

1 Wale, op.cit., p 190
 2 Sermons, p 351. Cf. pp 415, 597
 3 Ibid, p 357
 4 Collected Works, vol.III, p 374
 5 Sermons, p 94
 6 Ibid, p 574
 7 Loc. cit.

possible with God, on whose rich mercies and free grace in Jesus Christ, I alone depend for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."¹ Grace starts, so far as the sinner is concerned, with repentance: "It is necessary, as we have sinned, we should repent, for a Holy God could not, never can or will admit anything that is unholy into His presence: this is the beginning of grace in the soul."² To the believer grace comes through prayer and the Sacraments. "On receiving the Sacrament, especially before trials, I have found grace in a very affecting manner and in abundant measure, sometimes imparted to my soul."³ In a sermon on "Satan's Devices" preached and published in 1739, i.e. before he became a Calvinist, he referred to spiritual pride as a cause of losing God's grace: "To check all suggestions to spiritual pride, let us consider.....that being proud of grace is the most ready way to lose it; and that were we endowed with the perfections of seraphims, if we were proud of those perfections, they would but render us more accomplished devils."⁴

The attributes of God's righteousness and justice are logically maintained by Whitefield with the use of "legal" terminology characteristic of Calvinism in the Church of England and elsewhere in his time.

All men are sinners through sharing in the burden of "original sin", he says. God's justice is not obviated by His imputing the consequences of Adam's sin to all his posterity - on two/

1 Wale, op.cit., p 171

2 Sermons, pp 330, 334 f

3 Wale, op.cit., p 46

4 Sermons, p 490

two counts. Firstly, man is after all only a creature and has no right as such to question his Maker's acts; secondly, Adam was our representative through whom we stood or fell. According to the "first covenant", "he acted as a public person".

"Had he continued in his obedience, the benefits of that obedience would doubtless have been imputed to us; but since he did not persist in it, but broke the covenant made with him and with us in him, who dares to charge the righteous Judge of all the earth with injustice for imputing that to us also?" ¹

God being righteous in Himself is a God of law in relation to man. That there is a Divine law requiring the obedience of fallen man is to be unquestioned by anyone believing Scripture to be Divine, says Whitefield. "For in it" (the Epistle to the Romans), "we are told of a law written in the heart and a law given by Moses." All men are sinners in that they have broken these laws: "That each of us hath broken these laws is too evident from our sad and frequent experience". If there are laws like these, they require man's obedience, the lack of which certainly merits the reward of a penalty by God, the Giver of the law and the Judge. He concludes that

"if we are thus offenders against God, it follows that we stand in need of forgiveness for thus offending Him; unless we suppose God to enact laws, and at the same time not care whether they are obeyed or no; which is as absurd as to suppose that a prince should establish laws for the proper government of his country and yet let every violator of them come off with impunity. But God has not thus dealt with His creatures; no, as He gave us a law, He demands our obedience to that law, and has obliged us universally and perseveringly to obey it, under no less a penalty than incurring His curse and eternal death for every breach of it. For thus speaks the Scripture: 'Cursed is he that continueth not in all things in the law to do them', 'the soul that sinneth it shall surely die'. Now it has already been proved that we have all of us sinned; and therefore unless some means can be found to satisfy God's justice, we must perish eternally."

So then, says Whitefield, all men stand condemned before the/

¹ Sermons, p 473, Cf. pp 136, 351, 464, but especially p 689

the justice of the righteous God, and His justice cannot be moved. Repentance is no good: "There is no room left for us to expect a change of mind in God, though we should seek it with tears", he states after looking at Genesis 2:17 b ("In the day in which thou eatest, thou shalt surely die"). "Works" of the law are also useless: "Alas! 'by the law shall no man be justified: for by the law comes knowledge of sin'. It is that which convicts and condemns." Neither repentance, nor righteous works, "nor sacrifice, no, nor the obedience and death of angels themselves could possibly procure justification (acquittal, forgiveness, re-instatement) for us." Man's pardon in face of God's unchanging justice comes only through the merits of Christ's work, which was, nevertheless, the result of God's initiative:

"How am I lost to think that God the Father, when we were in a state of enmity and rebellion against Him, should notwithstanding yearn in His bowels towards His fallen, His apostate creatures: and because nothing but an infinite ransom could satisfy an infinitely offended justice, that He should send His only and dear Son Jesus Christ (who is God blessed forever and who had lain in His bosom from all eternity) to fulfil the covenant of works, and die a cursed, painful, ignominious death for us and our salvation!" ¹

To Whitefield it was clear that men cannot presume on the work of Christ in meeting the righteousness and justice of God. They cannot continue to disobey God's law, e.g. breaking the third commandment constantly. The "sin of profane cursing and swearing" is of course "foolhardy" in his eyes, in that it merits the full weight of the justice of God.² He gives us a picture also of the judgment of God upon the "heinous sin of drunkenness":

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that, as surely as the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom, so/

¹ Sermons, pp 473-477

² Tyerman, op.cit., vol I, p 100

so surely will He cast you into a lake of fire and brimstone, when He shall come to take vengeance on them that know not God and have not obeyed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that you were this day informed what the end of drunkenness would be. And I summon you in the name of that God whom I serve, to meet me at the judgment-seat of Christ, that you may acquit both my Master and me, and confess with your own mouths that your damnation was of yourselves and that we were freed from the blood of you all."¹

Putting aside the apocalyptic terminology in this we can see Whitefield's insistence on the fact that God executes sentence on sinners to establish His righteousness and justice.

It should be observed that Whitefield taught that God's mercy was not excluded by His justice and vice versa. In writing of a woman who thought that God was very merciful and would lightly regard her "sin", Whitefield reflects:

"I could not help remarking how the Devil loves to represent God as all mercy or all justice. When persons are awakened he would if possible tempt them to despair; when dead in trespasses and sins, he tempts them to presume. Lord, preserve us from making shipwreck against either of these rocks. Give us such a sense of Thy justice as to convince^{us} that we cannot be saved if we continue in sin, and such a sense of Thy mercy as may keep us from despair."²

Here the preacher was content to hold the mercy and justice of God as His attributes, without making any attempt to reconcile them. As has been seen, he did not seem to feel any logical barrier to a scheme of justice whereby the full rigour of the law was executed against Christ in man's stead, while at the same time, God's mercy had supplied this means of pardon. How God's absolute justice could be held consistent if believers were allowed to escape the penalty for their sin by imputation of Christ's meritorious and penal obedience and sufferings etc., or how the Divine goodness squares with the infliction of penal sufferings on the innocent and sinless Christ and at the same time men/

¹ Sermons, p 527 f

² Wale, op. cit., p 367 f

men are regenerated at the sight, were questions never apparently real to Whitefield's mind. He was content to preach these beliefs and rejoice in the fact that they were in fact sufficient to bring men to God and transform their lives.

The Holiness of God is seen in contrast to the state of man as he is by nature. In the light of the latter, it is necessary for a complete change to take place in man before he can know God,

"for a holy God could not, nor ever can or will, admit anything unholy into His presence: this is the beginning of grace in the soul. There must be a change of heart and of life before there can be a dwelling with a holy God. You cannot love sin and God too, you cannot love God and Mammon. No unclean person can stand in the presence of God; it is contrary to the holiness of His nature. There is a contrariety to the holiness of His nature and the unholy nature of carnal and unregenerate man. What communication can there be between a sinless God and impure creatures? Therefore you must have these tempers changed, you must be holy as God is: He must be your God here and you must be His people, or you will never dwell together in all eternity."¹

Thus God's holiness is equated with His purity and "otherness", and the challenge to man is to be "His People", separate and devoted to Him, before there can be any communion between God and man. Originally, creation, especially man, conformed to this nature of God, "because He being goodness Itself could make nothing but what is like Himself, holy, just and good."²

.....

1 Sermons, p 330

2 Ibid, p 380

B. God's Revelation - Natural - Special in Jesus Christ,
Scripture, Preaching - Experimental Knowledge of
God Necessary.

Whitefield assumes that an actual revelation has been made by God to man. Believing in the plenary inspiration of Scripture, he has no difficulty in accepting the view of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (1:19,20 and 2:12-20), that God has revealed Himself to all men in some fashion or other, and by that revelation men will be judged:

"That He hath also given us both a natural and a written law, whereby we are to be judged, cannot be questioned by anyone who believes St. Paul's epistle to be of Divine authority. For in it we are told of a law written in the heart and a law given by Moses."¹

Of course man's Fall in Adam necessitates something further than natural revelation if man is to renew communion with God:

"Having eaten the forbidden fruit, he (man) incurred the displeasure of God, and lost the Divine image, and therefore, without an external revelation, could never tell how God would be reconciled unto him or how he should be saved from the misery and darkness of his fallen nature."²

Generally Whitefield seems to have taken it for granted that his hearers believed in a Divine revelation.³

Natural revelation has already been referred to. Of what does it consist? What can man know as to what God requires of him apart from special revelation, and has man any capacity for knowing God and doing His will, since the Fall? As has been seen, there is the "law written in the heart", but Whitefield would further explain this by saying that there is a specific duty given to/

¹ Sermons, p 473. Cf. p 167

² Ibid, p 380

³ Ibid, p 269

to man through the exercise of his reason: "For though you cannot do what is spiritually good because you want spiritual principles of action, yet ye may do what is morally and materially good, in as much as ye are reasonable creatures." ¹ Here morality is thus possible without any awareness and acceptance of the deeper things of the Spirit, but this is not the usual opinion of Whitefield. Generally he grants no power in man at all to know or do anything good in the sight of God.

Turning to special revelation culminating in the Incarnation, it is possible to sum up Whitefield's view in this extract from a sermon:

"The words which I have read to you"(Daniel 9:24,"And to bring in an everlasting righteousness"), "are part of one of the most explicit revelations that was given of Jesus Christ before He made His public entrance into the world. It has been observed by some, and very properly too, that it is one mark of the Divine goodness to His creatures, that He is pleased to let light come in gradually upon the natural world. If the sun from midnight darkness was immediately to shine forth in his full meridian blaze, his great splendour would be apt to dazzle our eyes and strike us blind again; but God is pleased to make light come gradually in and by that means we are prepared to receive it. And as God is pleased to deal with the natural, so He has dealt with the moral, with the spiritual world. The Lord Jesus Christ did not appear in His full glory all at once, but as the sun rises gradually, so did the Lord Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, rise gradually upon men, with healing in His wings. Hence it was that our first parents had nothing to fix their faith upon but that first promise, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.' And in future ages, in sundry times and in divers manners, God was pleased to speak to our fathers by the prophets, before He spake to us in these last days by His Son; and the prophets that were more particularly dear to God, it should seem, had more peculiar and extraordinary revelations vouchsafed to them, concerning Jesus Christ."²

Thus Whitefield sets forth a doctrine of progressive revelation with a principle of "accommodation" embodied in it.

God was revealed in Christ. As in his conception of God, the/

¹ Sermons, p 326

² Ibid, p 160

the statements which Whitefield made about the person of Christ were in the main according to the accepted orthodoxy of the Church of England as expressed in her Articles. He took Articles 1 - 5 as his basis, naturally.

"Jesus Christ", he said, "is ^{co-essential,} co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father, very God of very God; and as there was not a moment of time in which God the Father was not, so there was not a moment of time in which God the Son was not."¹

Thus the Divinity and pre-existence of Christ were stated.

In Christ is God, which was denied by the Arians and Socinians of the time:

"Arians and Socinians deny this Godhead of Christ and esteem Him only as a creature", he said. "The Arians look upon Him as a titular Deity, as a created and subordinate God: but if they would humbly search the Scriptures, they would find Divine homage paid to Christ. He is called God in Scripture, particularly when the great evangelical prophet says, 'He shall be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the government shall be upon His shoulders'; and Jesus Christ Himself says, 'that He is the Alpha and the Omega'; and that the world was made by Him. But though this can be ever so plain, our gay airy sparks of this age will not believe the Lord Jesus Christ to be equal with the Father, and that for no other reason but because it is a fashionable and polite doctrine to deny His Divinity and esteem Him only a created God."

"Our Socinians do not go so far. They look upon Christ only to be a good man sent from God, to show the people the way they should go, on their forsaking Judaism, that He was also to be an example to the world and that His death was only to prove the truth of His doctrine. Many of those who call themselves members, yea, teachers of the Church of England, have got into this polite scheme."²

Against such Unitarian doctrine Whitefield maintained the full doctrine of the Divinity of Christ - He was co-equal etc. with the Father. But He is also God's Son: "Whose Son is He? This is the question our Lord put to the Pharisees in the words following the text" (Matthew 22:42). Those who are partakers of His Spirit, says Whitefield, "reply without hesitation, 'Thou art the Christ, the/

¹ Sermons, p 517

² Loc. cit.; cf. pp 148, 225, 243, 719

the Son of the ever-living God'".¹

The other traditional titles are to be given to Christ. He is the "Messiah" who comes with Divine power. His raising of Jairus' daughter and the widow's son from the grave were "pregnant proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah that was to come into the world."² We are to look into all Scripture to see the Christ: "In the Old(testament) you will find Him under prophecies, types, sacrifices, and shadows.....Have Christ always in view when you are reading the word of God, and this, like the star in the east, will guide you to the Messiah."³ "He is called Christ which signifies 'anointed', because He was anointed by the Holy Ghost at His baptism, to be a prophet to instruct, a priest to make atonement for, and a king to govern and protect His Church," i.e., He is the Messiah with the three-fold office of tradition.⁴ It appears certain that White-field would have held that Christ was aware of His vocation as Messiah from the outset of His ministry.

Christ is the eternal "Logos". When God was about to condemn man utterly for his sin in the garden of Eden, "the Son of God, the eternal Logos, says 'Father, spare the sinner'..... In the fulness of time descends the eternal Logos."⁵

Chiefly, He is the "Mediator" of the new covenant between God and man. Early in his ministry, the first question which/

¹ Sermons, p 243. Cf. p 179 ff on the Baptism and Temptation of Christ

² Ibid, p 396

³ Ibid, p 381

⁴ Ibid, p 464

⁵ Ibid, p 165

which Whitefield put to an "infidel" dangerously ill was:

"Do you believe Jesus Christ to be God, the one mediator between God and man?"¹ In the sermon on "The Resurrection of Lazarus" (text - John 11:43,44), he says in comment on verse 22 of that chapter:

"Whether these words imply an actual belief of our Lord's Divinity, is not certain. To me they do; because we shall presently find that she (Martha) did believe our Lord was the Son of God, and the Messiah which was to come into the world. Therefore when she said that she knew that whatsoever He asked of God, God would give it Him, she may be understood as referring to God the Father, under whom the Lord Jesus acted as Mediator, though equal to Him in respect to His eternal glory and Godhead."

Of verse 42 he says:

"Who can express with what fervour and intenseness of Spirit our glorious High-priest uttered these words! They are a thanksgiving arising from an assurance that His Father had heard Him: for Christ, as Mediator, was inferior to the Father."²

In the last quotation he has said that Christ is "our High-Priest". He says elsewhere: "In the meanwhile (we) can apply to Him as a compassionate High-Priest who was in all things tempted as we are, that He might experimentally be enabled to succour us when we are tempted."³ The title "Intercessor" has been implied above also. He says in a letter:

"When we are fighting with 'Amalek' below, it is good to have a 'Joshua' praying for us above. Jesus is our Joshua. Jesus is our Intercessor; He liveth, He ever liveth to make intercession, especially for His young soldiers. Yonder, yonder, He sits: whilst praying He reaches out a crown: at this distance you may see written in capital letters, 'Vincenti dabo'".⁴

But to Whitefield Jesus is also "Judge":

"Our/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 157. Cf. Sermons, p 179 ff

² Sermons, pp 403,407. Cf. pp 270,453

³ Ibid, p 184

⁴ Collected Works, vol,III, p 350. Cf Couplet quoted on p 405 and in other letters.

"Our Lord will not always send out His servants in vain to call you. The time will come when He will say, 'None of those which were bidden and would not come, shall taste of my supper'. Our Lord is a God of justice, as well as of love; and if sinners will not take hold of His golden sceptre, verily He will bruise them with His iron rod."¹ "O ye Pharisees who are now so good, so much better than others, how will ye stand before Christ when dressed in His glory as judge?"²

Of course Christ is responsible for miracles in the Old Testament as well as in the New³, just as in the character of the "eternal Word", He took part in the creation of the world and man.⁴

Further, Christ is the "Saviour", for "He is called Jesus, a Saviour, because He was to save us from the guilt and power of our sins, and like Joshua, by whom He was typified, to lead God's spiritual Israel through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, the promised inheritance of the children of God."⁵ It was the Father's doing that He was a Saviour, says Whitefield.⁶ Man has known Him for a Saviour right from the beginning of the race. After the Fall, "no sooner had man been convicted as a sinner, but lo! a Saviour is revealed to him, under the character of 'the seed of the woman', the merits of whose sacrifice were then immediately to take place, and who should, in the fulness of time, by suffering death, satisfy for the guilt we had contracted."⁷

Finally, to Whitefield Jesus is always the "Friend". A typical expression of this is: "O what a friend is Jesus! A friend/

1 Sermons, p 377

2 Ibid, p 213

3 Wale, op.cit., p 167. Cf Sermons, pp 381,453,464

4 Sermons, p 395 (already quoted supra p 49)

5 Ibid, p 464

6 Ibid, p 477 (Already quoted supra p 55)

7 Ibid, p 464

friend that sticketh closer than a brother. He is indeed the pilgrim's stay and staff. Few choose to try Him in such a station. This be my happy lot!"¹

It has been said that the prevalent Unitarianism of the eighteenth century led Whitefield to place a greater emphasis on the Divinity of Christ than on His humanity. Another contributing factor was the Calvinistic insistence on a legal view of the Atonement. Only a fully Divine Saviour, whose infinitely meritorious obedience in life and death was imputed to men, could adequately satisfy the holiness and purity of God, meet the demands of His law, and bear the punishment of sin on behalf of all sinners in such a way that the possibility was now open for men to be "re-instamped with the Divine image."

Christ was however truly man in His capacity as "Son of Man". In one passage only is the title used with the connotation of One who is the apocalyptic, eschatological "Son of Man": in an early reference to the Second Coming.² Elsewhere the title is given to Christ as an expression of His oneness with man's nature and experience: "He came down and took our nature upon Him; He was made of flesh and dwelt among us; He was put to death on our account".³ "For Christ was not only God but He was God and man in one person."⁴ In view of Matthew 22:41-43, men do not think rightly of the person of Christ unless they believe Him to be "perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting". The reason"/

¹ Collected Works, vol.III, p 109

² Wale, op.cit., p 76

³ Sermons, p 336. Cf. p 719

⁴ Ibid, p 244

reason why the Son of Man took upon Himself our nature was the Fall of our first parents." In the light of the Fall, Jesus offers to make atonement in the person of a man:

"Rather than we should perish, this everlasting God, this Prince of Peace, this Ancient of Days, in the fulness of time had a body prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost and became an infant. In this body He performed a complete obedience to the law of God; whereby He in our stead fulfilled the covenant of works, and at last became subject to death, even death upon the Cross, that as God He might satisfy, as man He might obey and suffer, and being God and man in one person, might once more procure a union between God and our souls."¹

Other reasons for the Incarnation under the particular circumstances recorded in the Bible are included in this:

"This Christ, this God Incarnate, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit that He might be freed from the guilt of our original sin, who was born of the Virgin that He might be the seed of the woman only, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, a Gentile Governor, to fulfil the prophecies.....this same Jesus who was crucified in weakness but raised in power, is that Divine person, that Immanuel, that God with us, whom we preach?"²

Christ's resurrection body is that of a man. "It is plain that He ascended into Heaven with the body which He had here on earth", says Whitefield, "for He says, after His resurrection, 'Handle me and see, a spirit has not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.'"³ He was repeating the doctrine of the Church of England Articles on this point.

Although Christ is referred to as the "Word" or the "Logos" a few times, "God's word" is nearly always used by Whitefield as referring to the Holy Scriptures.

The origin, necessity, and sufficiency of the Scriptures are thus described:

"They/

¹ Sermons, p 244 f. Cf. p 165 f

² Ibid, p 465

³ Ibid, p 459. Cf. Article 4 of the Church of England

"They are not of any private interpretation, authority, or invention. But holy men of old wrote them, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." "How foolishly then do the disputing infidels of this generation act, who are continually calling for signs from Heaven or seeking for outward evidence to prove the truth of Divine revelation! Whereas, what they so earnestly seek for is nigh unto, nay, within them. For let them but consult their own hearts, they cannot but feel what they want. Let them but consult the lively oracles of God, and they cannot but see a remedy revealed for all their wants, and that the written word does exactly answer the wants and desires of their hearts, as face answers to face in the water. Where is the scribe, where is the wise, where is the solidity of the reasoning of the disputers of this world? Has not God revealed Himself unto them as plain as their own hearts could wish? And yet they require a sign: but there shall be no other sign given them. For if they believe not a revelation which is every way so suited to their wants, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead."¹

Thus the Scriptures are Divine in origin and self-authenticating. The purpose of Scripture is as follows:

"As I told you before so I tell you again, upon these two truths rest all Divine revelation, it being given us for no other end, but to show us our misery and our happiness; our fall and our recovery; or in one word, after what manner we died in Adam, and how in Christ we may again be made alive."²

Some men might object to the truth of man's Fall and the present state of sin in which men apart from God find themselves, and so they would not see any need for the Scriptures; but Whitefield refers them to the Bible:

"This is the account which the sacred volume gives of this interesting point. This is that blessed book, the book of books, from whence, together with an appeal to the experience of our own hearts and the testimonies of all past ages, we have thought proper to fetch our proofs. For after all, we must be obliged to Divine revelation to know what we were, what we are, what we are to be. In there as in a true glass, we may see our real and proper likeness. And from there only can we trace the source/

¹ Sermons, p 379 ff. Cf Last paragraph p 269, and also p 687

² Loc. cit.

source and fountain of all those innumerable evils which like a deluge have overflowed the natural and moral world. If any should object against the authenticity of this revelation and consequently against the doctrine this day drawn from thence (original sin), they do in my opinion thereby very much confirm it. For unless a man was very much disordered indeed as to his understandings, will, affections, natural conscience, and his power of reasoning, he could never possibly deny such a revelation; which is founded on a multiplicity of infallible external evidences, hath so many internal evidences of a Divine stamp on every page, is so suited to the common exigencies of all mankind, so agreeable to all the experience of men, and which hath been so wonderfully handed and preserved to us, hath been so instrumental to the convicting, converting, and comfort-
-ing so many millions of souls, and hath stood the test of the most severe scrutinies and exact criticisms of the most subtle and refined as well as the most malicious and persecuting enemies that ever lived, even from the beginning of time to this very day!"¹

Whitefield was obviously not slow to make a vigorous apologetic for his view of Scripture. When man is, however, prepared to admit his miserable state (by nature), "here then God by His Word steps in and opens to His view such a scene of Divine love and infinite goodness in the Holy Scriptures, that none but men of such corrupt and reprobate minds as our modern Deists would shut their eyes against it." We must therefore give heed to this revelation, says Whitefield.

"Hence then arises the necessity of searching the Scriptures, for since they are nothing else but the grand charter of our salvation, the revelation of the covenant made by God with man in Christ, and a light to guide us in the way of peace, it follows that all are obliged to read and search them."²

Despite all that has been said, certain conditions, in Whitefield's opinion, must be fulfilled before the Word of God can be heard in Scripture:

(1) The reader must always look for Christ in both the Old and the New Testaments, as has been stated. "Have Christ, then, always in view when you are reading the Word of God, and this like/

¹ Sermons, p 141 f
² Ibid, p 380

like the star in the east, will guide you to the Messiah, will serve as a key to everything that is obscure, and unlock to you the wisdom and riches of all the mysteries of the Kingdom of God."¹

(2) He must have a humble, child-like disposition, "for God hides the sense of them from those who are wise and prudent in their own eyes, and reveals them only to babes in Christ, who think they know nothing as they ought to know." To those who discount revealed religion he would say:

"O that the unbelievers would pull down every high thought and imagination that exalts itself against the revealed will of God!.....Then would we have them no longer scoffing at Divine revelation, nor would they read the Bible any more with the same intent the Philistines brought out Samson, to make a sport at it; but they would see the Divine image and super-scription written upon every line."²

(3) There must be a sincere intention to put into practice what is read.

"A desire to do the will of God is the only way to know it. Jesus Christ is the same now as formerly to those who desire to know from His Word, who He is that they may believe on and live by; and to him, He will reveal Himself as clearly as He did to the woman of Samaria when He said, 'I that speak to thee am He'.....But to those who consult His Word with a desire neither to know Him, nor keep His commandments, to those, I say, He will never reveal Himself though they should search the Scriptures to all eternity."³

Therefore there must a "single intention". Whitefield says that if the reader applies the Scriptures to himself he receives full guidance.

"I dare appeal to the experience of every spiritual reader of Holy Writ, whether or not, if he consulted the Word of God in this manner, he was not at all times and at all seasons, as plainly directed how to act as though he had consulted the Urim and Thummin, which was upon the Highpriest's breast. For this/

¹ Sermons, p 381. Cf. p 718, where "Jacob's Ladder is a "type" of Christ (Genesis 28:12-15), and also p 687

² Ibid, p 381 f

³ Ibid, p 382

this is the way God now reveals Himself to man: not by making new revelations, but by applying general things that are revealed already to every sincere reader's heart." ¹

(4) One must labour to attain that spirit by which they were written. "For God being a Spirit, He cannot communicate Himself any otherwise than in a spiritual manner to the hearts of men; and consequently if we are strangers to His Spirit, we must continue strangers to His Word because it is altogether like Himself, spiritual." ²

(5) But this Spirit comes only by prayer; and so one must pray, and then "you will experience His gracious influence, and feel Him enlightening, quickening, and inflaming your souls by the Word of God." ³

(6) The Scriptures must be searched not only devoutly, but daily: for in them are the words of eternal life. "Wait constantly at wisdom's gate, and she will then, and not till then, display and lay open to you her heavenly treasures." ⁴

Whitefield himself strove to fulfil these conditions he laid down, and the result is seen in the language of all his sermons, letters and journals. He reveals himself to be "the man of the Book" primarily. How many thousands of people heard the following invitation to regard the revelation of God in Scripture as highly as he did himself?

"Taste and see how good the Word of God is and then you will never leave that heavenly manna, that angel's food, to feed on dry husks, that light bread in which men of false taste delight themselves. No, you will then disdain such poor entertainment and blush that you yourselves once were fond of it. The Word of God will then be sweeter to you than honey and the honey comb, and dearer than gold and silver. Your souls by reading it will be filled as it were with marrow and fatness, and your hearts insensibly moulded into the Spirit of its blessed Author./

1 Sermons, p 383. Cf. p 186 f and the use of Scripture in Christ's "Temptations". Also Wale, op.cit., pp 52,162,164,498.

2 Sermons, p 384

3 Loc.cit.; cf. p 187 and Wale, op.cit., p 51

4 Sermons, p 384

Author. In short you will be guided by God's wisdom here, and conducted by the light of His Divine Word into glory here-after."¹

Through preaching, the Word of God attracts men and strikes home to their hearts. "The people were so eager to hear the Word of God that in a short time there were thousands before the door"², is a frequent type of entry in letter or journal. The Word thus preached overcomes persons both emotionally and bodily.³

Whitefield says there must be an experimental knowledge of God in Christ. All revelation by God to man is of no use until it is brought home to the individual soul. For example, he says concerning 1 Cor. 2:2 :

"By the word 'know' we are not to understand a bare historical knowledge; for to know that Christ was crucified by His enemies at Jerusalem in this manner, will do us no more service than to know that Caesar was butchered by his friends at Rome. But the word 'know' means know so as to approve of Him....., so as to embrace Him in all His offices; to take Him to be our Prophet, Priest, and King; so as to give up ourselves wholly to be instructed, saved and governed by Him. It implies an experimental knowledge of His crucifixion, so as to feel the power of it, and to be crucified unto the world."⁴

He gives an illustration of the difference in these types of knowledge in his Journal, where after describing the conversion of Mr. Benjamin Seward ("lately it has pleased God to reveal His dear Son in him"), he writes:

"I write this to show how far a man may go and yet know nothing of Jesus Christ. Behold here was one who constantly attended on the means of grace, exact in his morals, humane, and/

1 Sermons, p 385

2 Wale, op.cit., p 456

3 Ibid, p 468, 469

4 Sermons, p 465. Cf. p 691; also p 533 f. where, by the Holy Spirit, the believer must know experimentally, "the power of His resurrection". Note also the reference to "rational assent only", Deists, Lord Bolingbroke, etc, pp 708-711. Also Wale, op.cit., p 475: "Many rest in a head knowledge....."

and courteous in his conversation, who gave much in alms, was frequent in private duties; and yet till about six weeks ago, as destitute of any saving, experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, as those on whom His name was never called and who still sit in darkness and the shadow of death."¹

Whitefield's stress on the necessity of this knowledge which is of faith will be shown more clearly when consideration is given to his doctrine of the ministry.

.....

Thus God takes the initiative in revelation, through His Son and the Word in Scripture, as well as through a certain knowledge given to natural man. Man must desire the special revelation and pray that by the Holy Spirit it may be given to his soul, for without an experimental knowledge of God, he is "unacceptable in person to God"; neither his "performances" ("sacrifices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving" as well as acts of charity to men), nor his "civil and moral actions and duties", are acceptable to his Maker.²

¹ Wale. op.cit., p 248 f

² Sermons, p 466 ff.

CHAPTER THREE

GOD AS REDEEMER, IN THE WORK OF CHRIST

The work of Christ in all its varied aspects was central to Whitefield's theology. His embracing Calvinism led him further into elaboration of a systematic, logical scheme of salvation, parts of which received regular exposition in his writings and preaching, parts of which he believed in as sound doctrine, but never or seldom preached. It is doubtful whether he saw his scheme as a consistent whole at any one time, and it is to be doubted also whether he fully realised the meaning or implications of all that he said he held as true. It may be maintained that no one should have expected him to do so. He was no theologian but a preacher primarily, even though he would certainly have asserted himself that he preached good theology. In his handling of the aspects of the Work of Christ which took fore-most place in his estimation, there can be found without question vividly and soundly formulated theology. It was in respect to those beliefs in the theology which are held by all balanced theologians to be marginal only and not central or even of the essence of the faith, that Whitefield was rather vague. He concentrated on reviving belief in a few of the great New Testament truths about Christ, and his success in this must be measured in terms of the recognised value and success of his public ministry.

.....

In/

In particular, the doctrine of the "New Birth", based on John chapter 3 and other New Testament passages, was most prominent in Whitefield's religious thought. It was his main theme. In the pulpit, in letters, and in conversations and contacts with others, reported in his Journals, again and again he refers to its importance for every man. For instance, in urging "self-denial" (consecration) in the Christian life, he says: "For since the sum and substance of religion consists in recovery from our fallen estate in Adam by a new birth in Jesus Christ, there is "etc."¹

Apparently there were others just before him who felt the insufficiency of the conventional religion of the times. The manner in which Charles Wesley lent him a work by one of these men, a Scot named Henry Scougal, and in which this book, "The Life of God in the Soul of Man", affected Whitefield, has already been considered in his "Life" (Chapter One supra). It was when he read that "true religion was union of the soul with God and Christ formed within us", that a "ray of Divine light was instantaneously darted in upon his soul, and from that moment, but not till then, did he know that he must be a new creature."² So gripped was he by this first light on what was (to him) new doctrine that he wrote at once to all his relations to tell them there was such a doctrine as the new birth. Sometime later, one of his earliest sermons was on "Regeneration or the Nature of the New Birth in Christ"(1737). Indeed from his earliest preaching days there were references in some way or other in nearly all his sermons to this "new" doctrine, the truth of which he had experienced while at Oxford.

Whitefield/

¹ Sermons, p 297

² Cf. Collected Works, vol.II, p 305 (Dec.15,1749)

Whitefield asserted that anything less than the full doctrine was insufficient. In 1750, he preached a sermon in which are these two sentences:

"Let me tell you, no matter whether you are Presbyterian or Independent, Churchman or Dissenter, Methodist or no Methodist, unless you are new creatures, you are in a state of damnation". "I tell thee, O man, I tell thee, O woman, whoever thou art, thou art a dead man, thou art a dead woman, nay, a damned man, a damned woman, without a new heart."¹

Whitefield condemned certain "professors" of religion. First deserving reproof are those who "rest barely in the use of means", i.e. who "rest in a bare performance of outward duties without perceiving any real inward change of heart." "We may observe a great many persons", he remarks, "to be very punctual in the regular returns of public and private prayer, as likewise of receiving the Holy Communion, and perhaps now and then too in keeping a fast." They "think all is over when they have thus complied with those sacred institutions; whereas, were they rightly informed, they would consider that all the instituted means of grace (as prayer, fasting, hearing and reading the Word of God) are no farther serviceable to us, than as they are found to make us inwardly better and to carry on the spiritual life in the soul."² To regard the "means" as the end is worse than non-observance, he says. It is "by far much worse"; for "if you use them and at the same time abuse them, you thereby encourage others to think there is nothing in them, and therefore must expect to receive the greater damnation." Such/

1 "The Putting on the New Man A Certain Mark of the Real Christian. A Sermon Preached at the Tabernacle, on the Fifth of January 1750", pp 17,27. The sermon (8vo.30pp) was taken down in shorthand and not published until after Whitefield's death. Cf. Sermons, p 515

2 Sermons, p 501 f. Cf p 512: "All these things are good in their places...." and the illustration given on p 577 Cf. also Whitefield's account of his own early experience given in a sermon about 1768, Sermons.p 702

Such "professors" fall into one of the worst sins - self-righteousness.

"It is because I know such person are more odious in the sight of God than the vilest sinners, that makes me so earnest in warning them of their guilt and danger; for I have more hope of common swearers, drunkards, fornicators, Sabbath-breakers, and harlots, and of Deists and infidels, than I have of such self-righteous Pharisees.....You may go in an easy, decent, and polite way of religion and obtain a reputation in the sight of men; but you are odious in the sight of God, and incarnate devils within!"¹

Strong language for the devotees of formalism in religion!

Other "professors" rest in the attainment of some moral virtues and falsely imagine they are good Christians if they are just in their dealings, temperate in their diet, and do no hurt or violence to any man." This is insufficient; for if only this were required, "heathens of old" or St. Paul before his conversion (who lived in all good conscience) could qualify as good Christians.² "The sum of the matter is this: Christianity includes morality as grace does reason; but if we are only moralists, if we are not inwardly wrought upon..... however we may call ourselves Christians, we shall be found naked at the great day."³

In addition to these two groups are the people who rest in a partial amendment of themselves. These are the hitherto openly profane who,

"seeing the ill consequences of their vices and many worldly inconveniences it has reduced them to, on a sudden as it were, grow civilised; and therefore flatter themselves that they/

¹ Tyerman, op.cit, vol. I, p 301 (from a sermon not in the Collected Works, nor in the 1825 edition of his sermons used throughout this study).

² Sermons, p 501

³ Cf. Wale, op.cit., p 406

they are very religious because they differ a little from their former selves and are not so scandalously wicked as they once were." They reserve some "secret darling sin, hidden lust, or vicious habit from which they will not break away."

To these the preacher speaks: "Thou must be informed that nothing short of a sound conversion will fit thee for the Kingdom of Heaven.....Thou must not only be an almost but an¹ altogether new creature."

When one bears in mind the general conditions of the age he lived in, not to mention the theological climate of the times, one feels that Whitefield has not gone too far in his pressing the absolute necessity of the "new birth". He was confronted with a state of affairs in religion, the dangers of which have been present in every age. Whatever the declared reasons, there have been periods in the history of the Church when religion has been largely externalised and all subjectivism has been suspect. What it was like at this juncture may be summed up by an incident recorded in Whitefield's Journal under date of January 29, 1739:

"Sat up with John Wesley in conference with two clergymen of the Church of England and some other strong opposers of the New Birth. God enabled me with great simplicity to declare what He had done for my soul, which made them look upon me as a madman.....Now therefore I am fully convinced there is a fundamental difference between us and them. They believe only an outward Christ, we further believe that He must be inwardly formed in our hearts also."²

His belief in the insufficiency of the outward sign by itself is shown by a significant conversation recorded in his "Journal" under the date of September 19, 1740, a conversation he had with the Commissary of Massachusetts and several other Established/

¹ Cf. Sermons, p 704 f

² Wale, op.cit., p 197

Established Churchmen. It was significant in that, despite Whitefield's frequent claim to adhere to the Articles of the Church of England, it reveals his virtual abandonment of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration (Article number 27). Perhaps this had been forced on him by his opponents who used the argument of regeneration at baptism to refute the need of a second birth in Christ. In 1738, the Rev. Tipping Silvester had published a sermon addressed to the "Religious Societies", which he preached before the University of Oxford. His main point was that men are born again in baptism. Now - in this conversation of 1740 - Whitefield said that grace was not effective "ex opere operato" at the baptism of infants. He goes on: "I also said that if every child was really born again in baptism, then every baptised infant would be saved." "And so they are", said Dr. Cutler. "How do you prove that?" "Because the rubric says , 'that all infants dying after baptism before they have committed actual sin are undoubtedly saved'". I asked, "what text of Scripture there was to prove it?" "Here", said he (holding a Prayer Book in his hand), "the Church says so."¹

It is also to be noted that in the sermon, "The Great Duty of Charity Recommended", the congregation are exhorted to exercise charity in saving the souls of others, because anything less than being reborn brings an adverse fate at death: "Death to those who are not born again would be so far from being a release/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 459 f

release from all misery (of body), that it would be an inlet to all torment and that to all eternity."¹

Why are the religious practices abovementioned thus insufficient for a man in life or at death? Whitefield justifies the centrality of the New Birth and its reality on the following grounds:

(1) Scripture: "That God Himself in His holy Word hath told us so" is a weighty argument. "Many texts might be produced out of the Old Testament to prove this point". When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night "surely he could not forget how often the Psalmist had begged of God to make him a 'new heart' and 'renew a right spirit within him'".² And so also with the prophets.

But the New Testament, says Whitefield, has the doctrine plainly and often repeated. Christ Himself ("the great Prophet and Instructor of the world") says "Except a man (everyone that is naturally the offspring of Adam) be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." In support of these words in John 3:5 are the following: 2 Cor. 5:17, Ephesians 4:22-24, Titus 3:5.³ Whitefield rightly points out:

"Now what can be understood by all these different terms of being 'born again', of 'putting off the old man' and 'putting on the new', of being 'renewed in the spirit of our minds' and 'becoming new creatures', but that Christianity requires a thorough, real, inward change of heart?"

These/

¹ Sermons, p 482

² Psalm 51:10

³ 2 Cor. 5:17- "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". Ephes. 4:22-24 - "That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness". Titus 3:5 - "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

These Scriptural terms are not "mere metaphors, words of a bare sound without any real solid signification."¹

(2) The Impossibility of present communion with God so long as He remains pure and man remains in his existing corrupt state due to original sin. Whitefield remarks:

"God is described in Scripture as a Being of such infinite sanctity as to be of 'purer eyes than to behold iniquity', as to be so transcendently holy that it is said 'the very heavens are not clean in His sight' and 'the angels themselves He chargeth with folly'. On the other hand, man is described as a creature altogether 'conceived and born in sin'.....And since there is such an infinite disparity, can anyone conceive how a filthy, corrupted, polluted wretch can dwell with an infinitely pure and holy God, before he is changed and rendered in some measure like Him?"²

Experience as well as Scripture proves that we are born in sin and therefore incapable to hold communion with God whilst in such a state.³

(3) The Nature of man's intended future happiness, i.e. the happiness God has prepared for those who unfeignedly love Him. The reason for this is much the same as in (2) above. From Jeremiah 18:1 f, we are to understand the necessity that "this 'marred clay', I mean these depraved natures of ours, must necessarily undergo an universal moral change." This is a present reality in order to prepare us for Heaven - "for what fellowship could unrenowned sons of Belial possibly keep up with the pure and immaculate Jesus?" he asks. We cannot minutely and particularly describe Heaven, he states elsewhere, but "this we may venture to affirm in general: that as God is a Spirit, so the happiness He has laid up for His people is spiritual/

¹ Sermons, p 498. Cf. also "The Putting on the New Man A Certain Mark of the Real Christian. A Sermon Preached at the Tabernacle, 5 January, 1750", p 9

² Sermons, p 499

³ Ibid, p 437. Cf. Wale, op.cit., p 296

spiritual likewise: and consequently unless our carnal minds are changed and spiritualised, we can never be made meet to partake of that inheritance with the saints in light."¹ We may flatter ourselves that even though we continue in a natural corrupt state we should enjoy Heaven if God let us in, but "since its joys are only spiritual and no unclean thing can possibly enter those blessed mansions, there is an absolute necessity of our being changed and undergoing a total renovation of our depraved natures before we can have any taste or relish of those heavenly pleasures."

(4) Christ's Redemption. The completion of this demands that we become new creatures. His purpose in coming to men was not only for the forgiveness of sins but to change men. "Accordingly the holy Scriptures inform us that whom Christ justifies or whose sin be forgiven.....those He also sanctifies, purifies and cleanses and totally changeth their corrupted natures."² The close connection between sanctification and the New Birth is further commented on below.

The agent of the New Birth is neither "moral suasion" (i.e. rational arguments), nor "the power of our own free will." It cannot be denied, Whitefield admits, that reason and moral persuasion has its own part to play. He says that he who disdains to use it cannot be called a fit preacher. But some superior power has to make the Word effectual to awaken dead souls to life. On the other hand, the belief that man can work this change in himself by his own free will is "an idol everywhere/

¹ Sermons, p 499

² Ibid, p 500

-where set up; but we dare not fall down and worship it." "Our own free will if improved may restrain us from the commission of many evils and put us in the way of conversion, but after exerting our utmost efforts (and we are bound in duty to exert them) we shall find the words of our own Church Article to be true: that 'man since the Fall hath no power to turn to God'". He goes on to state the true agent of the New Birth:

"This blessed agent is the Almighty Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost". This same Spirit moved on the face of the deep at Creation and overshadowed Mary before the birth of Christ. His work is "what John the Baptist calls 'being baptised with the Holy Ghost', without which his and all other baptisms, whether infant or adult, avail nothing."¹

There is, Whitefield concedes, a certain mystery about this working of the Spirit:

"How this glorious change is wrought in the soul cannot be easily explained. For no one knows the ways of the Spirit save the Spirit of God Himself. Not that this ought to be any argument against this doctrine, for, as our blessed Lord observed to Nicodemus when He was discoursing on this very subject, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth'; and if we are told of natural things and we understand them not, how much less ought we to wonder if we cannot immediately account for the invisible workings of the Holy Spirit?"²

Even so this does not preclude the possibility of knowing the meaning and effects of regeneration. These are observable. In the first place, as has been reiterated again and again above, a great change takes place in the sinner. But the nature, the meaning, and the effects of this change are in Whitefield's thought so inextricably bound up together that it is clear he can make little distinction between the "new birth", "regeneration"

¹ Sermons, p 144 f

² Ibid, p 497

"regeneration", "repentance", "sanctification", the state of "being in Christ", etc. These are all synonyms for the same event as what follows demonstrates. On 2 Cor. 5:17 he says:

"What are we to understand by being a 'new creature'? And here it is evident to the first view that this expression is not to be explained as though there were a physical change required to be made in us or as though we were to be reduced to our primitive nothings and created and formed again.....No, it only means that we must be so altered as to the qualities and tempers of our minds that we must entirely forget what manner of person we once were."¹

It is this a spiritual change affecting our souls:

"So our souls, though still the same as to essence, yet are so purged, purified and cleansed from their natural dross, filth and leprosy by the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit that they may be properly said to be made anew."

It is a complete change, i.e. it is a change which affects all the parts of the whole man. With reference to this complete transformation, the similarities in the following extracts between what Whitefield calls "repentance" and "sanctification" may be noted:

"Repentance in the first place as to its nature, is the carnal and corrupt disposition of men being changed into a renewed and sanctified disposition. A man that has truly repented is truly regenerated.....The motley mixture of the beast and the devil is gone.....Your understandings are enlightened with the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and your wills, which were stubborn, obstinate, and hated all good, are obedient and conformable to the will of God. Indeed our Deists tell us that a man now has a free will to do good, to love God, and to repent when he will: but indeed there is no free will in any of you but to sin. Nay, free will leads you so far that you would if possible pull God from His throne.....But when (man) is turned unto the Lord by an evangelical repentance, then his will is changed."²

"By sanctification I mean a total renovation of the whole man. By the righteousness of Christ believers become legally, by sanctification they are made spiritually, alive.... They are sanctified therefore throughout, in spirit, soul and body/

¹ Sermons, p 497. Cf. "By thorns and briars the old man must be scratched to death. O this crucifixion work!" Wakely, op. cit., p 375. Note also The Weekly History, no. 9, p 4 where a hearer of Whitefield writes: "He asserted that whosoever was born of the Spirit and united to Jesus Christ would be as sensible of the change as a woman was when she had given birth to a child, though the pangs of birth be different & not in all persons alike".

² Sermons, p 326

body. Their understandings which were before dark, now become light in the Lord; and their wills, before contrary to, now become one with the will of God; their affections are now set on things above; their memory is now filled with Divine things; their natural consciences are now enlightened; their members which were before instruments of uncleanness and of iniquity unto iniquity are now instruments of righteousness and true holiness; in short, they are new creatures. 'Old things are passed away, all things are become new' in their hearts. Sin has now no longer dominion over them, they are free from the power, though not the indwelling and being of it; they are holy both in heart and life, in all manner of conversation; they are made partakers of the Divine nature, and from Jesus Christ they receive grace for grace, and every grace that is in Christ is copied and transcribed into their souls; they are transformed into His likeness, He is formed within them, they dwell in Him and He in them; they are led by the Spirit and bring forth the fruits thereof; they know Christ is their Emmanuel, God with and in them; they are living temples of the Holy Ghost and therefore, being a holy habitation unto the Lord, the whole Trinity dwells and walks in them; even here they sit together with Christ in heavenly places and are vitally united to Him, their Head, by a living faith; their Redeemer, their Maker, is their Husband, they are flesh of His flesh, bone of His bone; they talk, they walk with Him as a man talketh with his friend; in short, they are one with Christ, even as Jesus Christ and the Father are one."¹

As may be readily imagined anything Whitefield had to say on "living godly in Christ Jesus", or "conversion", or "being in Christ", is included in thought within this summary of the entire Christian experience of the sanctified sinner.²

Whitefield claims that one of the characteristics of the newly-born in Christ is the new awareness of the naturalness of prayer: "None of God's children, as one observes, comes into the world still-born. Prayer is the very breath of the new creature, and therefore if we are prayerless, we are Christless."³

Finally/

¹ Sermons, p 456

² Ibid, pp 546 and 613

³ Ibid, p 428

Finally, one other aspect can perhaps be mentioned, viz. the relation of regeneration ~~of regeneration~~ to the Kingdom of God. Briefly Whitefield's view may be stated thus in his own words: "Well might our Lord say 'The Kingdom of God is within you', for they who are truly born of God carry Heaven in their hearts."¹ As it is elsewhere held that Heaven is a state of being (as well as a place), the Kingdom is thus equated with "being in Christ", having Christ's rule in the heart - which is true enough, of course, but not what Christ meant by Luke 17:21. Whitefield is correct however in believing that the Kingdom consists in all who are newly-born, regenerate, and sanctified in Christ.

.....

Other Aspects of Christ's Work, Chiefly Calvinistic.

All the theological preachers and theologians of Whitefield's generation were capable of enlarging in detail on this central work of Christ in regeneration - all those, that is, who happened to be in sympathy with the importance of the doctrine. At different times they looked at it from different aspects, aspects which revealed to them exactly how Christ was and is such a Saviour as to be able to effect a rebirth in men's souls as has just been considered. Some of Whitefield's view-points regarding the work of Christ for and in the experience of the regenerate will now be examined.

The/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 366

The first of these are the doctrines of the imputed righteousness of Christ and of justification by faith alone. Whitefield regarded the commonly accepted notions of Christian righteousness as true within certain limits. Even in some Scripture passages (e.g. Acts 24:25), "it signifies what we call moral honesty or doing justice between man and man." In addition "it likewise signifies inward holiness, wrought in us by the blessed Spirit of God."¹ But in passages such as Daniel 9:24 (which is referred to Christ as being the Mediator of the new dispensation), he believes that righteousness "is what all Reformed divines that have clear heads and clean hearts call an imputed righteousness or the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ to be imputed to poor sinners upon their believing."² In 1739 when he began to lean towards Calvinism, Whitefield first speaks of this doctrine. In a letter to James Hervey, he wrote:

"Not a righteousness or inward holiness of our own whereby we may make ourselves meet; but the righteousness of another, even the Lord our righteousness; upon the imputation and apprehending of which by faith, we shall be made meet by His Holy Spirit to live with and enjoy God. Let me advise dear Mr. Hervey to lay aside all prejudice and to pray over St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and then let him tell me what he thinks of this doctrine. Most of your old friends are now happily enlightened."³

What Whitefield thought of the self-righteousness of man is seen in a letter to the Rev. William Baddiley, another of Lady Huntindon's chaplains:

"January/

¹ Sermons, p 163. Cf. p 417

² Ibid, p 164. Cf. pp 3, 149, 417, 418, 455

³ Collected Works, vol. I, p 95

"January 12, 1750.....It is the 'Diana' of every age. It is the golden image which that apostate Nebuchadnezzar, king, continually sets up, and the not falling down to worship it, much more to speak, write, or preach against it, exposes one to the fury of its blind votaries, and we are thrown directly into a den of devouring lions."¹

By the righteousness of Christ is understood "all that Christ hath done and all that Christ hath suffered", "Christ's active and passive obedience." After the Fall, when God's justice may well have condemned sinful man utterly, the Son of God (who was present) stayed God's hand with the promise that He would do what Adam could not do. "In the fulness of time", the Logos descended, and "the Lord Jesus Christ being clothed in human nature fulfilled all righteousness; He submitted to every institution of God and^{was} pleased to obey the whole moral law and afterwards.....at the last, the Lord Jesus bled and died."² His "active" obedience was displayed in His life, and His "passive" obedience in His death. The legal nature of this righteousness imputed to man is further emphasised by Whitefield's

comment on the cry from the Cross, "It is finished", viz.

"As much as to say, 'now the arduous work, the difficult task I had undertaken, blessed be God, is now completely over; all the demands of the law are finished; now God's justice is satisfied,'" etc.³ Again, in a sermon on John 16: 8 f., reference is made to that "perfect, personal, all-sufficient righteousness which He has wrought out for that world which the Spirit is to convince." Verse 10 is "one argument that the Holy Ghost makes use of to prove Christ's righteousness.....For had He not wrought/

¹ Collected Works, vol. II, p 314

² Sermons, p 165. Cf. p 149 f

³ Ibid, p 166

wrought out a sufficient righteousness, the Father would have sent Him back as not having done what He undertook, and we should have seen Him again."¹

The objective reality of Christ's righteousness must be carefully maintained. Whitefield says this is where the Quakers are mistaken in their one-sided emphasis:

"He (a Quaker) seemed to make the light of conscience and the Holy Spirit one and the same thing, and represented Christ within and not Christ without as the foundation of our faith; whereas the outward righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us, I believe, is the sole fountain and cause of all the inward communications which we receive from the Spirit of God."²

This part of Christ's work is limited to "believers" in its scope. In 1750 he wrote:

"I know nothing of Christ's righteousness being imputed to all mankind. It is enough to say with the Scriptures, 'That it is imputed to all believers'. What does my dear Mr. B--- think of that assertion of the Apostle, 'He made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him'? and again, 'Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, etc.' cum multis aliis, vide Romans 4th and 6th - Is it not as express as can be, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers?"³

Such doctrine as this, when joined to Whitefield's Calvinistic belief concerning predestination, led John Wesley, in his letter to James Hervey about the latter's work, "Theron and Aspasio", to ask him to lay aside the phrase "the imputed righteousness of Christ", saying, "It is not scriptural, it is not necessary, it has done immense hurt."⁴ Hervey's refusal to do this, added to the intrigues of a third party (William Cudworth), caused a lasting breach in the friendship of Wesley and/

¹ Sermons, p 418. Cf. p 147

² Wale, op.cit., p 331. Cf. p 337 f under date "Sat. November 4"

³ Collected Works, vol.II, p 363

⁴ J. Wesley's Works, vol. X, p 318

and Hervey from this time(1754).¹

So much for Whitefield's definition of the nature, source, and necessity of the Christian righteousness which is imputed to man - but there is something more to be said regarding one quality of this righteousness, viz. its enduring character. Whitefield made much of this. In one instance at least, he says that not only is Christ's obedience imputed to man for righteousness but also Christ's perseverance in that obedience.² But there are wider reasons which lead men to know that Christ's righteousness is everlasting. Firstly, "because Christ's righteousness was intended by the great God to extend to mankind even from eternity." It is but one of those streams "flowing from that inexhaustible fountain, God's electing, God's sovereign, God's distinguishing, God's everlasting love." A further reason is that "the efficacy of Christ's death took place immediately upon Adam's Fall." As Christ is "the treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament under the types and shadows of the Mosaic dispensation," saints under the law as well as those under the Gospel dispensation are to be saved only through Christ's righteousness. This everlasting character is due not only to God's original intention in eternity and to the fact that men of pre-Gospel ages can enjoy the benefits, but also is due to the fact that the efficacy of Christ's "bloody death and atonement" is to continue "till time shall be no more." Jesus is the same now for any sinner as at the time of His death (Hebrews 13:8). Lastly, it is everlasting because its/

¹ Tyerman, op.cit., vol.II, p 349

² Sermons, p 459

its benefits endure from conversion in this world into the next world. Once again the doctrine of perseverance is boldly stated: "Those who once take hold of and are interested in it, shall be saved everlastingly by Christ." These four reasons, however, really amount to one only. It has simply been maintained by Whitefield that over four periods of time - eternity to Adam, the Fall to the death of Christ, the Crucifixion to the believer's conversion, and the latter to the end of time - Christ's righteousness never alters, having no beginning nor end, like Himself.¹

Whitefield was challenged on the doctrine of imputation at different times and he answered the objections as he had opportunity and felt a necessity to do so. On one occasion,

"a young gentleman, once a minister of the Church of England but now secretary to Mr. Penn (of Pennsylvania), stood up with a loud voice and warned the people against the doctrine I had been delivering, urging, 'That there was no such term as imputed righteousness in Holy Scripture; that such a doctrine put a stop to all goodness; that we were to be judged for our good works and obedience and were commanded to do and live.'"

Whitefield's answer to this was to preach later in the same day on Jeremiah 23:6, "The Lord our Righteousness", refuting these typical criticisms of his doctrine.² Included in the objections of Mr. Penn's secretary was one of the chief that Whitefield had to face all his life, from humble curates and bishops alike, viz., that imputed righteousness destroys the necessity for good works or holiness and leads to Antinomianism (generally spelt with a capital "A" at this time). In his sermon on Jeremiah 23:6, Whitefield challenges those who maintain/

¹ Sermons, p 166 f

² Wale, op.cit., p 352 f

maintain a doctrine of good works alone to produce better-living "preachers and professors of it" than the "believers in the article by which the Church stands or falls", i.e. imputed righteousness. These objectors ("profane moralists") are less fruitful of good works than Whitefield and those like him. Despite the bad example of some who believe in imputation, the doctrine does not exclude good works or lead to licentiousness - rather the reverse. "It excludes works indeed from being any cause of our justification in the sight of God; but it requires good works as a proof of our having this righteousness imputed to us and as a declarative evidence of our justification in the sight of men."¹ About thirty years after he first preached on this text he said:

"For my part I am more than ever convinced that the doctrine of imputed righteousness is a doctrine of the Gospel... I stand not only as a pardoned sinner but as a justified sinner, I stand before God justified and so do all whom Jesus Christ has purchased.....But I would have everybody who stands up for Christ's imputed righteousness, especially as some good people are apt to speak of it and carry it very high, to be careful in the same discourse to speak as highly of obedience too to Christ's commandments."²

Quoting the words of St. Paul in Philippians 3:9, he said:

"The consequence of this imputation.....will be a conversion from sin to holiness. I am almost tempted to say it is perverseness in people to preach against the doctrine of imputed righteousness because they love holiness and charge the Calvinists with being enemies to it. How can they be charged with being enemies to sanctification who so strenuously insist on its being the genuine fruit and unquestionable proof of the imputation?" (Sermon about 1765) 3

Turning/

¹ Sermons, p 150 f Cf. p 296

² Ibid, p 659

³ Ibid, p 614. Cf p 719

Turning to another objection of Mr. Penn's secretary - that there was no Scriptural warrant for the doctrine - Whitefield insisted upon the prior place given to "inner piety" in our Lord's teaching, e.g. in the Sermon on the Mount, he said it came before Jesus' mention of good works. The incident of the Rich Young Ruler in Mark 10:17 ff. had apparently been used as a passage supporting a moralistic view of Christianity.¹ Whitefield senses the wrongness of this but comments on the text (verse 19) in a manner which, in the light of verse 21, scholars of today would consider unnecessary and exceedingly dubious. The exposition is interesting as being typical of Whitefield's methods, which certainly do not disclose any great skill in exegesis. The Lord, says Whitefield, mentioned the "commandments" only to try and awaken the young man to an awareness of how far he had broken them all, how much he was therefore liable to the wrath of God, how far he could not rely on his own righteousness and thus should have looked to Christ and depended on His. Instead of doing this, ignorant of his true self and the way in which he had at least in spirit broken the law, he tried to justify himself by saying, "All these have I observed from my youth." Incidentally, the love of Jesus for the youth is to be referred to Jesus's "human nature" only, and of course is far different from His love for Mary, Lazarus, and Martha (impliedly they had been born again of God). Whitefield admits that the objection based on Matthew 25:31 f is plausible. But the "blessed" on the Son of Man's right hand do not depend on their good works for salvation, as is shown by the questions they ask. They have been unconscious throughout their lives that these actions were going to affect their judgment before the/

the King. Even so, it is by "grace" they are accepted and the justice of the Judge might rightfully have been exercised against one and all without reproach to God.¹

Other opponents of the doctrine said that "Christ was to make up for the defects of our righteousness" - against whom Whitefield was happy to launch the whole fervour of one who held strongly the leading Reformed doctrine - justification by faith alone :

"However contrary to the doctrines of the Church of England, yet our pulpits ring of nothing more than doing no one any harm, living honestly, loving your neighbour as yourselves, and do what you can, and then Christ is to make up for the deficiency. This is making Christ to be half a Saviour and man the other part."

Whitefield claimed that a denial of the doctrine actually leads to Arminianism and Papistry (for "Arminianism is the back door to Popery"). It would be a popish doctrine, he says, if it were held either that the intercession of saints should be added to the intercession of Christ before the Father or that the death of a Christian would necessarily have to be added to Christ's to be sufficient for anyone's salvation. "Judge ye" therefore "if it be not equally absurd, equally blasphemous, to join our obedience either wholly or in part with the obedience of Christ, as if it were not sufficient."² Even a suggestion of "Popish doctrine" was deemed a worthy argument to confute opposers.

Finally there was the argument of the Last Judgment and the probable fate of those who relied on good works solely, taking/

¹ Sermons, p 153 f

² Ibid, p 155

taking the chance that such men as Whitefield were unnecessarily stressing imputation. By their "poor works" such people would have to stand or fall. "By your works therefore shall you be condemned, and you, being out of Christ, shall find God to your wretched souls a consuming fire", is his opinion.¹

Naturally it follows that belief in the doctrine of imputation leads to the forgiveness of sins of the guilty and acquittal by God:

"In one sense God now sees no sin in them.....They are actually justified, acquitted, and looked upon as righteous in the sight of God; they are perfectly accepted in the Beloved... Does sin condemn? Christ's righteousness delivers them from the guilt of it.....Does the Law condemn? By having Christ's righteousness they are dead to the Law as a covenant of works; Christ has fulfilled it for them and in their stead. Does death threaten them? They need not fear.....God has given them the victory by imputing to them the righteousness of the Lord Jesus."²

From what now follows it will be seen more clearly how closely akin to Whitefield's doctrine of imputed righteousness is his doctrine of justification by faith only. A clear distinction is hard to draw, but certainly more of a subjective nature enters into justification than into the other doctrine. It might be stated thus: Christ's righteousness is always objectively a reality, but it is not effective for the individual until by faith it works in him, justifying him in the sight of God.

It seems strange that Whitefield scarcely mentioned this important doctrine of justification by faith at all in his sermons or letters until his return to England from his first journey/

¹ Sermons, p 155

² Ibid, p 455. Cf. p 471

journey to America, i.e. not until the end of 1738. Nine sermons had already been published.¹ Concerning Whitefield at this period, the biographer of James Hutton, Whitefield's first publisher and keen co-worker until he went over to the Moravians, says:

"Whitefield was young and modest but an earnest preacher. He said little however of the Saviour and of justification through Him, but forcibly insisted on the necessity of being born again, transformation, etc. In this way he arrested the attention of many, particularly of the young, and led them to seek the salvation of their souls. They fasted, they wept, and they strove; but how salvation was to be effected they knew not."²

Again, during that return passage from America in 1738, he wrote a letter "To the Inhabitants of Savannah", in his charge. Speaking of the "new birth" which he had preached much to them, he said: "The author of this blessed change is the Holy Ghost; and the means to attain this Holy Spirit you know and the way you know." However, while saying that the "means" are self-denial, public worship, reading the Scriptures, secret prayer, self-examination, receiving the Sacrament, he never once mentions a word about faith in Christ.³ It seems that as yet he had not appreciated how outstandingly important this doctrine of Luther and the Reformation was, even though he had experienced its truth in his own life. This fact is confirmed in two directions. On his arrival in London December 8, 1738, he wrote in his "Journal": "The old doctrine about justification by faith only I found much revived...."(The Wesleys and the Moravians had been preaching it assiduously in his absence)..."Who dare assert that we are not justified in the sight of God merely by an act of/

¹ Eight of these are in "Sermons" i.e. nos. 4, 8, 11, 18, 29, 43, 46, 54. It must be remembered that the first editions of Whitefield's sermons contained parts not in his Collected Works and vice versa.
² D. Benham, "Memoirs of James Hutton", p 13
³ Collected Works, vol. III, p 429

act of faith in Jesus Christ without any regard to works, past, present or to come?"¹ Again, in 1740 he published his "Short Account", an autobiography up to 1737 written during his second voyage to America in 1739, in which he states that "one (of my friends) lately confessed he did not like me so well at Oxford as the rest of his brethren because I held justification by faith only. And yet, he observed, I had most success. But blessed be God, most of us have now been taught this doctrine of Christ." This whole reference to knowing the doctrine while at Oxford he deleted from his 1756 edition of the "Account", which tends to show that he himself realised it was out of place in a record of his University days.² However, that Whitefield followed the lead of the Wesleys and others from 1739 onwards, is shown by a reference in the "Journals" under date August 8, 1739:

"I felt I could not but take notice of a fundamental mistake his Lordship of London (Dr. Edmund Gibson) was guilty of in a pastoral Letter published this day: for in it he exhorts his clergy so to explain the doctrine of justification alone as to make our good works a necessary condition of it."³

The "notice" taken of this "mistake" was in a sermon preached to 20,000 people at Blackheath the same day, the introduction to which contains:

"Were I to ask you how you expect to be justified in the sight of an offended God, I suppose you would answer, only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were I to come more home to your consciences, I fear most would make the Lord Jesus Christ but in part their Saviour, and go about as it were to establish a righteousness of their own.... We have had so many legal/

1 Wale, op.cit., p 187

2 Ibid, p 53. Note on this page the following: "Burkitt's and Henry's 'Expositions' were of admirable use to lead me into this and all other Gospel truths."

3 Ibid, p 319

legal and so few free-grace preachers for these many years that most professors seem to be settled upon their lees and rather deserve the title of Pharisees than Christians."¹

A few days after, he sailed for America, but he did not leave the correction of the "mistake" of the Bishop at the above. While on board ship, he wrote "A Letter from the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield to the Religious Societies lately set on foot in several parts of England and Wales", in which he said:

"I think it my bounden duty to exhort you to contend earnestly for the doctrine of 'justification by faith only', because so many blind guides are lately gone out into the world. It is to be feared that many of our present preachers are no better than doctrinal papists. One of the most reputed orthodox prelates in the Kingdom in a late pastoral letter, advises his clergy, 'so to explain the doctrine of justification in the sight of God by faith only as to make good works a necessary condition.' Such advice from a Roman cardinal would be no more than we might expect, but coming from a bishop of the Church of England, is surprising and much to be lamented." (Having stated the doctrine of imputed righteousness, he proceeds -) "'We are accounted righteous before God only for the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith', saith the eleventh Article of our Church. Observe, my brethren, justified by or through faith and not for faith; for faith is only a means or instrument whereby the whole righteousness of Christ is applied to the sinner's soul. Whoever thus believes may be assured that his pardon is sealed in Heaven, notwithstanding he has lived in open breach of God's commandments all his lifetime before. This faith will not, however, be dead, idle, or inactive; for it is not a faith of the head or a bare assent to things credible as credible: the devils thus believe and tremble; but it is a faith of the heart, a living principle of new life, infused into the soul by the Spirit of God, applying that inwardly which was wrought for him outwardly by the obedience and death of Jesus Christ, and continually exciting the possessor of it to show it forth by his works; not as necessary conditions, but as proofs of his justification in the sight of God; and as so many tokens of gratitude and love for what God has done for his soul."²

Whitefield is certainly teaching the full doctrine here, including the ethical implications of it. A few months later (April 20, 1740), the Pennsylvania Commissary preached on James 2:18. Whitefield considered it necessary to preach on the same text/

¹ Sermons, p 348

² Collected Works, vol. IV, pp 27-29. Cf. Sermons, p 471

text that very day in order to confute the clergyman's false doctrine, "for he all along took faith to be only an assent to the truths of the Gospel. He said St. Paul and St. James spoke of the same kind of justification; that works mentioned by St. Paul were only works of the ceremonial law, that the doctrine of imputed righteousness had done much harm.....and that we were justified by our works at the last day and consequently were to be justified in the same manner now." This was the kind of opposition Whitefield had to face respecting his doctrine not only from preachers but from pamphleteers. An influential pamphlet published by "Charles Chauncey, D.D., Boston, 1743", called "Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England" was one among many. Along with many other things, Dr. Chauncey refers to certain "dangerous errors" among the people as the result of Whitefield's labours. Two of these are "the vilifying of good works" and "decrying sanctification as an evidence of justification".¹ The good Dr. Chauncey was quite wrong in laying these charges at the door of Whitefield, as will have been gathered plainly already. And in that same year, in a sermon on Romans 7:4, Whitefield said:

"That we should bring forth fruit unto God', are glorious words and proper to be considered by such who would explode the doctrine of free justification as an antinomian doctrine and as though it destroyed good works. No, it establishes and lays a solid foundation whereon to build the superstructure of good works."²

It is obvious that Whitefield had quite a balanced view of this age-long and wearisome controversy between "faith" and "works"/

¹ pp 274 f and 285 f

² Sermons, p 127. Cf. pp 246-249, and especially p 459.

"works". It was said by him as a summary on salvation:

"Every man that is saved is justified three ways; first, meritoriously by the death of Christ: 'It is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin'; secondly, instrumentally, by faith: faith is the instrument whereby the merits of Jesus Christ are applied to the sinner's heart; thirdly, we are justified declaratively, namely by good works: good works declare and prove to the world that our faith is a true saving faith: 'Show me thy faith by thy works'".¹

The time, energy, prayer, and money from his own pocket, which Whitefield expended for the Orphan House in Georgia and for other philanthropies prove how real was this balanced doctrine to his own mind; but even so he did not resolve the tension which must always exist between faith and works.

Finally, Whitefield offered proof that all mankind in general and every individual in particular stands in need of being justified. As usual the proof is largely Scriptural - setting forth the reality of original sin (wherefore mankind in general needs to be justified) and the fact that each one is an "actual" sinner against God's law in his day to day life (wherefore each requires justification).² He could say this and yet hold that Christ's imputed righteousness availed only for "believers", because faith on the part of each sinner was essential for the benefits of justification to be realised.

.....

In his "Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion" (1744), John Wesley says: "Faith implies assurance, an assurance of the love of God to our souls, of His being now reconciled to us, and having forgiven all our sins."³ This assurance of salvation was one of the most strongly held doctrines of the Methodists/

1 Sermons, p 250

2 Ibid, p 472 ff

3 Wesley's Works, vol.VIII, p 23

Methodists generally, and Whitefield was no exception. Whether he learnt it from the Wesleys and the Oxford Methodists, or the Moravians, or from the second paragraph of the seventeenth article of the Church of England¹, or from the Presbyterians whose Confession of Faith contains it (chap.XVIII), could perhaps never be definitely ascertained. Probably he was influenced by all these. Certainly he held a belief very similar to Wesley. In the early days he was no doubt classed with the Wesleys in attacks on their doctrine. While Whitefield was first in America (1738), a sermon had been preached (and was later published) by the Rev. A. Bedford, Chaplain to Frederick, Prince of Wales, in the church of St. Lawrence Jewry. To profess to have received such an assurance of the forgiveness of sins, he said, savoured of spiritual pride. He branded it as "grand enthusiasm"; "instead of bringing a man nearer to Heaven, it sets him farther from it, for the whole tenor of the Gospel is to teach us humility and lowliness of mind." "If it pleased God, by His Holy Spirit, to give me such an assurance, I should think myself heartily obliged to bless His name for it in private, and humbly beg a continuance of it; but I should think myself obliged in conscience to conceal it, unless I was called forth to martyrdom." The trouble was, of course, that Whitefield and the others spoke and wrote freely of it and encouraged their followers to disclose their assurance to one another. Whitefield himself had published his "Journals" with a number of imprudent expressions savouring of egotism and certainly/

1 "As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ....."etc.

certainly describing his feelings in too rapturous a fashion for the generally un-"enthusiastic" men of his day. As has been already noted, he drastically revised these "Journals" for the edition of 1756, but in his early years some of the chief weapons against the Methodists were pamphlets based on extracts culled from Whitefield's writings and twisted easily to suit the ends of opponents.¹ Even the eminent Dr, Edmund Gibson, the Bishop of London, whose "pastoral letter" of 1739 (see supra p 95 f) contains criticisms of Whitefield and his friends based wholly on the former's "Journals", charges them with claiming extraordinary communications with God and extraordinary assurances of a special presence with them.² In a sermon preached in 1743, Whitefield shows that the conflict is still on:

"Some/

¹ Note Benjamin Franklin's opinion: ".....His writing and printing from time to time gave great advantage to his enemies. Unguarded expressions, and even erroneous opinions, delivered in preaching, might have been afterwards explained or qualified; but 'litera scripta manet'. Critics attacked his writings violently, and with so much appearance of reason, as to diminish the number of his votaries and prevent their increase. So that I am satisfied that if he had never written anything, he would have left behind him a much more numerous and important sect; and his reputation in that case would have been still growing even after his death; because, there being nothing of his writing on which to found a censure and give him a lower character, his proselytes would be left at liberty to attribute to him as great a variety of excellences as their enthusiastic admiration might wish him to have possessed."- "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin", p 129. Whitefield would have had to change his character altogether to have restrained himself to be silent in print and to do this for the reasons Franklin suggests. It seems probable that his unusual course of giving his journals to be printed first led Wesley to do the same, just as his printing of sermons must have influenced Wesley to print his also.

² Cf. Whitefield's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, p 44 ff supra, and Chauncey, op.cit., p 178 f, p 271.

"Some indeed, I am afraid, are so presumptuous to affirm, or at least insinuate, that there is no such thing as knowing or being fully assured, whilst here below, whether we are in Christ or not. Or at least if there be such a thing, it is very rare or was only the privilege of the primitive believers. Part of this is true and part of this is false."

To deny the doctrine is to go against the Word of God, where it is undoubtedly set forth; as in 1 John 3:24 and 5:10, Galatians 4:6.¹ Even at this comparatively early date he grants that it is not entirely essential to have assurance (as John Wesley also thought in later years²). Whitefield says:

"Not that I dare affirm that there is no real Christian but what has this full assurance of faith.....yet I dare assert that it is necessary for the well-being of a Christian. And for my part I cannot conceive how any persons that pretend to Christianity can rest satisfied or contented without it."³

But again, even before this, he wrote, probably to Howell Harris,

"April 28, 1741.....As for assurance I cannot but think (that) all who are truly converted to Christ must know there was a time in which they closed with Christ; but then, as so many have died with only a humble hope and have been under doubts and fears, though they could not but be looked upon as Christians, I am less positive than once I was, lest haply I should condemn some of God's dear children. The farther we go in the spiritual life, the more cool and rational we shall be, and yet more truly zealous. I speak this by experience."⁴ (He was in the midst of the divisive controversy with Wesley over predestination at this time!)

Whitefield's Calvinism appears, so far as this doctrine is concerned, in his letter to John Wesley answering the latter's sermon "On Free Grace" during the predestinarian controversy. Whitefield argues:

"Yes, you say, many, very many of those who hold it not in all parts of the earth (i.e. the doctrine of election) have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of the Spirit, the continual/

1 Cf. Collected Works, vol. II, p 241: "Who more sinful than Paul, or the gaoler, Zachaeus or Magdalene? and who more assured of their salvation?"

2 J.H. Overton, "John Wesley", p 84

3 Sermons, pl21 f. Cf. practically the same in p 606 f (?1765)

4 Collected Works, vol. I, p 260. Cf. Chauncey, op.cit., p 271.

continual light of God's countenance, from the moment in which they first believed, for many months or years to this very day'. But how does dear Mr. Wesley know this? Has he consulted the experience of many, very many, in all parts of the earth? Or, could he be sure of what he hath advanced without sufficient grounds, would it follow that their being kept in this light is owing to their not believing the doctrine of election? No, this, according to the sentiments of our Church, 'greatly confirms and establishes a true Christian's faith of eternal salvation through Christ', and is an anchor of hope, both sure and steadfast, when he walks in darkness and sees no light; as certainly he may, even after he hath received the witness of the Spirit,¹ whatever you or others may unadvisedly assert to the contrary. Then, to have respect to God's everlasting covenant and to throw himself upon the free, distinguishing love of that God who changeth not, will make him lift up the hands that hang down and strengthen the feeble knees. But without the belief in the doctrine of election and the immutability of the free love of God, I cannot see how it is possible that any should have a comfortable assurance of eternal salvation. What could it signify to a man whose conscience is thoroughly awakened and who is warned in good earnest to seek deliverance from the wrath to come, though he be assured that all his past sins are forgiven and that he is now a child of God, if notwithstanding this, he may hereafter become a child of the devil? Could such an assurance yield any solid lasting comfort to a person convinced of the corruption and treachery of his own heart and of the malice, subtilty and power of Satan? No! that which alone deserves the name of a full assurance of faith is such an assurance as emboldens the believer under the sense of his interest in distinguishing love, to give the challenge to all adversaries, whether men or devils, and that with regard to all their future as well as present attempts to destroy; saying with the Apostle, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?...'", etc.²

The sharpness of his views (as just quoted) was not always evident. At other times, he exhorts all to believe in and desire this privilege, though without the certainty that they will receive it. "Not only righteousness and peace, but joy in the Holy Ghost, is a necessary part of the Kingdom of God within us; and although all are not to be condemned who have not an immediate assurance, yet all ought to labour after it"/

¹ Note: "The believer has his frosty and winter days and woe be to them that think they always have a summer"(Sermons, p 576); and, "When God withdraws His sensible presence from a believer's soul.....(he) may even then be kept from doubting his interest in Christ".(Whale, op.cit., p 424)

² Collected Works, vol.IV, p 64 f

it". Why are all Christians not conscious of it? Whitefield says:

"I really believe one great reason why so many go mourning all their life is owing to their ignorance of their Christian privileges. They have not assurance because they ask it not; they ask it not because they are taught that it does not belong to Christians of these last days; whereas I know numbers whose salvation is written upon their hearts as it were with a sunbeam. They can give men and devils the challenge to separate them, if they can, from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord."¹

Furthermore, though a man is the greatest of sinners, he should draw near to Christ and urge that as an argument why He should give him "the greatest and most abiding assurance of His everlasting love."²

.....

To turn to other aspects of Christ's work about which Whitefield held strong views at one part of his career is to come up against his Calvinism and the particular issues over which he and the Wesleys so bitterly disagreed. These are the doctrines of "sinless perfection", predestination either to election or to reprobation, irresistible grace, and final perseverance. All the letters, pamphlets and sermons in which this controversy is referred to will not be dealt with here. It would be tedious to follow the disputes through chronologically. Besides this is not the place for such a history,³ However, at some stage it is necessary surely to indicate even briefly both Wesley's and Whitefield's respective positions. It is proposed therefore to set forth Wesley's position first and then to reveal Whitefield's beliefs in contrast, concluding by stating/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 372

² Collected Works, vol.II, p 241

³ See Appendix B for chronological list of references to the disputes in the letters, journals etc. of the two men.

stating any modifications either may have made in later years, and also how Whitefield acted as an evangelist in the light of his Calvinism.

Whitefield charged Wesley with holding the doctrine of "sinless perfection". In the first place, Wesley called it "Christian Perfection" in most instances and not "sinless perfection". In the second place, he defined it in terms of genuine Christian experience which Whitefield seems blindly to have misunderstood. The very manner in which Wesley arrived at the doctrine shows us how seriously he had considered it before he put a name to it. In 1765 he writes:

"But how came this opinion into my mind? In 1725 I met with Bishop Taylor's 'Rules of Holy Living and Dying'. I was struck particularly with the chapter on 'Intention', and felt a fixed intention 'to give myself up to God'. In this I was much confirmed in my heart soon after by 'The Christian Pattern', and longed to give God all my heart: this is just what I mean by perfection now: I sought it from that hour. In 1727 I read Mr. Law's 'Christian Perfection' and 'Serious Call' and more explicitly resolved to be all devoted to God in body, soul and spirit. In 1730 I began to be 'homo unius libri'; to study (comparatively) no book but the Bible. I then saw in a stronger light than ever before the only one thing needful, even faith that worketh by the love of God and man, all inward and outward holiness; and I groaned to love God with all my heart, and to serve Him with all my strength. January 1, 1733, I preached the sermon on The Circumcision of the Heart; which contains all that I now teach concerning salvation from all sin, and loving God with an undivided heart. In the same year I printed for the use of my pupils, 'A Collection of Forms of Prayer', and in this I spoke explicitly of giving 'the whole heart and the whole life to God'. This was then as it is now my idea of perfection, though I should have started at the word. In 1735 I preached my farewell sermon at Epworth in Lincolnshire. In this likewise I spoke with the utmost clearness of having one design, one desire, one love, and of pursuing the one end of our life in all our words and actions. In January 1738 I expressed my desire in these words:

'O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone!
O may Thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown!
Strange flames far from my heart remove,
My every act, thought, word, be love!'

And I am still persuaded this is what the Lord Jesus hath bought for me with His own blood. Now whether you desire and expect/

expect this blessing or not, is it not an astounding thing that you or any man living should be disgusted at me for expecting it; and that they should persuade one another that this hope is 'subversive of the foundations of Christian experience'? Why then, whoever retains it cannot possibly have any Christian experience at all! Then, my brother and Mr. Fletcher (of Madeley), and I, and 20,000 more who seem both to fear and to love God, are in reality children of the devil and in the road to eternal damnation."¹

Wesley's doctrine may be summarised thus: "It is indwelling love, banishing all conscious sin, received by faith in an instant, and maintained from moment to moment by humble dependence on God. It is aware of itself, attainable in this life, and yet ascetically detached from the normal life of men." Wesley defined sin as "a wilful transgression of a known law" and as for perfection, he "was driven to apply limits to this illimitable term: to make distinctions in his own way between 'blameless' and 'guiltless', 'purity' and 'maturity'". In view of this it can be said that "certainly anyone who collected all his references on the point in his sermons, journals, letters and pamphlets, would have to say that on Wesley's definitions of 'sin' and 'perfection', he was fully committed to the phrase 'sinless perfection'.....A Christian is, for Wesley, so far perfect as not to commit sin."² All this must be born in mind when the opposition his doctrine aroused is taken into account.

What Wesley thought about predestination and its implications may be fairly derived from the following concise and characteristic entry in his "Journals" under date August 24, 1743/

¹ John Wesley's Works, vol.III, p 211. Cf.Overton, op.cit., p 82, and D. Butler, "Wesley and Whitefield in Scotland", p 88 f.

² W.E. Sangster, "The Path to Perfection", pp 27,81,91

1743 (i.e. after the controversy had largely passed away and he and Whitefield were friends again):

"Having found for some time a strong desire to unite with Mr. Whitefield as far as possible, to cut off needless dispute, I wrote down my sentiments as plain as I could in the following terms:- There are three points in debate:

1. Unconditional Election 2. Irresistible Grace 3 Final Perseverance.

With regard to the First, Unconditional Election, I believe, That God before the foundation of the world did unconditionally elect certain persons to do certain works, as Paul to preach the Gospel; That He has unconditionally elected some nations to receive peculiar privileges, the Jewish nation in particular; That He has unconditionally elected some nations to hear the Gospel, as England and Scotland now and many others in past ages; That He has unconditionally elected some persons to many peculiar advantages both with regard to temporal and spiritual things: And I do not deny(although I cannot prove it so) That He has unconditionally elected some persons to eternal glory. But I cannot believe - That all those who are not thus elected to glory must perish everlastingly; Or, That there is one soul on earth who has not ever had a possibility of escaping eternal damnation.

With regard to the Second, Irresistible Grace, I believe, That the grace which brings faith and thereby salvation into the soul, is irresistible at that moment; That most believers may remember some time when God did irresistibly convince them of sin; That most believers do at some other times, find God irresistibly acting upon their souls: Yet I believe that the grace of God, both before and after these moments, may be and hath been resisted; and That in general, it does not act irresistibly; but we may comply therewith or we may not. And I do not deny, That in some souls, the grace of God is so far irresistible that they cannot but believe and be finally saved. But I cannot believe, That all those must be damned in whom it does not thus irresistibly work: Or, That there is one soul on earth, who has not, and never had, any other grace than such as does in fact increase his damnation and was designed of God to do so.

With regard to the Third, Final Perseverance, I incline to believe, That ~~where~~ there is a state attainable in this life from which a man cannot finally fall; And, That he has attained this who can say, 'Old things are passed away; all things' in me 'are become new'.¹

It can be readily seen that the chief points of difference between this doctrine and Calvinism were in two directions/

¹ Wesley's Works, vol.I, p 426. Cf. vol.X, p 209 f (para 16 f) from which position this quotation reveals concessions to Whitefield's Calvinism.

directions: Wesley refused to believe in the eternal decree of some to reprobation and eternal damnation, which was logically required by the other scheme, and Wesley maintained the freedom of moral action to every man, in face of belief in irresistible grace either to election or to reprobation. These affronted the deep sense of the justice and (especially) of the love of God possessed by him and his brother Charles.¹ The glory of their preaching was their universal hopes held out freely to the large masses of the poor and ignorant of England and Scotland. The chief statements of their beliefs published abroad in 1739-40, which caused Whitefield to write and preach against them were (a) the sermon "On Free Grace" by John Wesley and (b) the Hymnary put out by them both which contained so many of Charles Wesley's hymns placing the greatest stress on the Arminian position of universal redemption.

Considering now Whitefield's doctrine, it appears that before 1739 (June), when he first reveals a tendency to Calvinism, he thought exactly as the Wesleys - if he had given these matters any deep thought at all at this stage. He seems to/

¹ Note: In the sermon "On Free Grace" (1739) Wesley said: "Call it by whatever name you please, election, preterition, predestination, or reprobation, it comes in the end to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this - by virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned: it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved". (Wesley's Works, vol. VII, p 375)
In 1770, he published this: "The sum of all this is: One in twenty (suppose) of mankind are elected, nineteen in twenty reprobated. The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can. Reader, believe this or be damned. Witness my hand, A----T----!" (Works, vol. XIV, p 198, last sentence)
Also C. Wesley's Journal, vol. I, p 276 f

to have thought exactly as they did about the experience they called "Christian perfection", for example. On January 9, 1738, he wrote: "God give me a deep humility, a well-guided zeal, a burning love, and a single eye and then let men or devils do their worst." This was surely the perfection Wesley desired. But a little time later he shows that he had grossly misunderstood Wesley's doctrine. His first misreading of it may quite possibly have been copied from others and especially through his correspondence with the Erskines in Scotland. On August 3, 1739, he wrote to the Rev. Ralph Erskine: "I am no friend to sinless perfection. I believe the indwelling (though not the dominion) of sin remains in the hearts of the greatest believers."¹

Of course from the early days the Methodists had been identified with the doctrine of "sinless perfection". Dr. Hooker, the editor of the "Weekly Miscellany", who, together with other writers to that paper, repeatedly attacked the Wesleys, the Methodists, and Whitefield particularly, wrote in his leading article of February 10, 1739: "They pretend to a sort of sinless perfection and boast of inward joys above other Christians."² So far as one can see, the first occasion on which Whitefield applied what he believed mistakenly to the Wesley's doctrine, was in a letter on March 26, 1740. From then on, it entered into nearly every reference to the points of dispute. If Whitefield acquired his knowledge of Wesley's belief from such persons as are referred to in the following letter, it is no wonder he opposed it:

"Dear/

¹ Collected Works, vol. I, p 58

² Tyerman, op.cit., vol. I, p 175

"Dear brother Charles Wesley is more and more rash. He has lately printed some very bad hymns (!). Today I talked with Brother N---. He tells me that for three months past, he has not sinned in thought, word or deed. He says he is not only free from the power, but the very inbeing of sin. He now asserts that it is impossible for him to sin. I talked with three women. One said she had been perfect these twelve months. I asked every one (of these women) whether they ever used the Lord's Prayer. They were unwilling to answer but afterwards said, 'Yes'. I asked them whether they used it for themselves and could say, 'Forgive us our trespasses'. They said, 'No, they used it for others only.' Another said Jesus Christ could not sin and therefore she could not; for everyone that is perfect must be as his Master." ¹

In a sermon published 1753 called "The True Nature of Beholding the Lamb of God", there appears to be a hit at the Wesleyan doctrine of perfection (this shows Whitefield's own doctrine at this time very well) :

"There was no corruption in the heart of the immaculate Lamb of God for Satan's emissaries to hold on; but this property belongeth only to Him. For any of His followers, though arrived at the highest pitch of Christian perfection, much less for young converts, mere novices in the things of God, to presume that they either have arrived, or ever shall while on this side of eternity, arrive at such a sinless state argues such an ignorance of the spiritual extent of the moral law, of the true interpretation of God's word, of the universal experience of God's people in all ages, as well as of the remaining unmortified corruptions of their own desperately wicked and deceitful hearts, that I venture to tell the preachers and abettors of any such doctrine, however knowing they may be in other respects, they know not the true nature of Gospel holiness, nor the completeness of a believer's standing in the unspotted imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, as they ought to know, or as I trust they themselves, through Divine grace, will be made to know before they die. Surely it is high time to awake out of this delusive dream." ²

But it is far more likely that at this time Whitefield was having a tilt at Antinomian extremists among all ranks of evangelical believers, because in November 1741 (i.e. a month after he had resumed correspondence with John Wesley) he wrote to/

¹ The Weekly History, no. 4, p 1

² Quoted in Tyerman, opcit., vol.II, p 296. Cf. Collected Works, vol.III, p 201 (1757): "We are called to be saints and not angels...."

to a friend in Edinburgh:

"I am resolved not to rest till everything contrary to true, catholic, Christian love, be rooted out of my soul. Christ's blood and Spirit are able to do this for me. I only need to pray to God to make me willing to have it done. I believe I shall see greater things than ever. We cannot expect too great things from God."¹

To another he wrote:

"I rejoice that your soul is thirsting for holiness. God grant that it may never cease till you experience the full and glorious liberty of His children. I see plainly how Satan loved to drive to extremes. Since there is no such thing as having the inbeing of sin destroyed, he would not have people press after a delivery from the power of it. This also is owing to the corruption of our hearts. The old man doth not love to be crucified and slain, but I hope the language of your heart and mine is this -

'Reign in me, Lord, Thy foes control,
That would refuse Thy sway;
Diffuse Thy image through my soul,
And bring the perfect day.

Scatter the last remains of sin,
And seal me Thine abode;
O set me purified within,
A temple meet for God.

My root of holiness Thou art,
For faith hath made Thee mine;
With all Thy fulness fill my heart,
Till I am wholly Thine.'" ²

Slightly modified by Whitefield herein, these verses were part of Wesley's hymn on "Christ our Sanctification" - published in that hymn book of 1740 to which Whitefield had taken exception. Surely here he was expressing almost entirely the same doctrine as the Wesleys' "Christian Perfection"; that is, except for retaining a certain mystical belief in the continued "inbeing" of sin.

Whitefield claimed that his doctrine of predestination was/

¹ Collected Works, vol. I, p 341

² Ibid, p 342

was borne out by experience and the Articles of the Church of England, not to mention Scripture. It is certain that he interpreted his past history in the light of his Calvinistic doctrine when he came to write his "Short Account"(published 1740). At the beginning of this autobiography, he says:

"Whatever foreseen fitness for salvation others may talk of and glory in, I disclaim any such thing. If I trace myself from my cradle to my manhood I can see nothing in me but a fitness to be damned. If the Almighty had not prevented me by His grace, and wrought most powerfully upon my soul, quickening me by His free Spirit when dead in trespasses and sins, I had now either been sitting in darkness or in the shadow of death or condemned as the due reward of my crimes, to be forever lifting up my eyes in torments. But such was the free grace of God to me, that though corruption worked so strongly in my soul and produced such early and bitter fruits, yet I can recollect very early movings of the blessed Spirit upon my heart, sufficient to satisfy me that God loved me with an everlasting love, and separated me even from my mother's womb for the work to which He was afterwards pleased to call me."¹

In keeping with this strong sense of personal election and vocation, all other teaching on election, so far as its positive aspect is considered, was based. He claims that experience precedes his doctrine of election to eternal life. Similar cases to his own were encountered in his ministry after he had become a Calvinist and in the midst of the disputings. He records some in his "Journals" (November 9, 1740):

"I mention these cases in particular", he says, "because I think they are remarkable proofs of the doctrine of God's election and everlasting love. Whatever man's reasoning may suggest, if the children of God fairly examine their own experience, if they do God justice, they must acknowledge that they did not choose God but that God chose them. And if He chose them at all, it must be from all eternity and that too without anything foreseen in them. Unless they acknowledge this, man's salvation must be in part owing to the free-will of man;² and if so, unless men descend from other parents than I /

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 28

² Cf. John Wesley's view(1743) supra p 106, with letter of Howell Harris to Whitefield, H.J.Hughes, "Life of Howell Harris", p 183 f., (in Oct.1741 at the end of the controversy).

I did, Christ Jesus might have died and never seen the travail of His soul in the salvation of His creatures. But I would be tender on this point and leave persons to be taught it of God! I am of the martyr Bradford's mind. Let a man go to the grammar school of faith and repentance before he goes to the university of election and predestination. A bare head-knowledge of sound words availeth nothing. I am quite tired of Christ-less talkers. From such may I ever turn away!"¹

This sounds as if Whitefield was repenting his being influenced so much by others in the previous twelve months and the manner in which he had rushed in to defend his Calvinism. Whitefield thus rests election on the love of God Himself. He says: "For He loved the elect with an everlasting love, or as our Lord expresses it, 'before the foundation of the world'" (Matthew 25:34).² There was an eternal contract between the Father and the Son, the Mediator, which is expressed in Psalm 89: 3 (David is a "type" of Christ). In the awareness of His impending sacrificial and meritorious death, says Whitefield, Christ prays with complete assurance, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am' (John 17:24). The Kingdom awarded to the elect is in the discretion of God the Father (Matthew 20:23 b). "It is not mine to give but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of the Father." He says that "election is a mystery - that shines with such resplendent brightness, that to make use of the words of one who has drunk deeply of electing love, it dazzles the weak eyes of some of God's dear children; however, though they know it not, all the blessings they receive, all the privileges they do or will enjoy through Jesus Christ flow from/

1 Wale, op.cit., p 493 f. Cf. Sermons, p 638 (1768)

2 Collected Works, vol.IV, p 65 and Sermons, p 453.

Cf. Whitefield's comments on Acts 9:15 re St. Paul's election.

from the everlasting God the Father."¹

The Wesleys would never have quarelled with any of this. But despite his emphasis on the fact that election springs from God's love, it is the sovereignty of God's will and the logical implications which for Whitefield must be preserved above all else. This is where the Calvinistic doctrine of irresistible grace came in and where Wesley would disagree.² When the sinner is called to God through Christ, his will is over-ruled by God. This^{was}/Whitefield's position invariably, but Wesley's only as a possibility. Wesley would have accepted this comment by Whitefield on Zaccheus' conversion (sermon on the same, text - Luke 19:9,10):

"Jesus also calls him by name, as though He were well acquainted with him; and indeed well He might; for his name was written in the Book of Life, he was one of those whom the Father had given Him from all eternity: therefore He must abide at his house that day.....With this outward call, there went an efficacious power from God, which sweetly over-ruled his natural will; and therefore, (verse 6), 'He made haste and came down.'"³

But it was when Whitefield departed from his own experience of election to Calvinistic logic that he left the known facts on which a true doctrine must be formulated. He then entered the realm of speculation, because it led him to the doctrine of the double decree, of foreordination to damnation as well as to salvation. Wesley had exclaimed in his sermon on "Free Grace": "How uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men without any preceding offence or fault of theirs, were unchangeably doomed to everlasting/

1 Sermons, p 454

2 Wesley's Works, vol. X, p 221.

3 Sermons, p 361

-lasting burnings!" - to which Whitefield replied:

"Do not they who believe God's dooming men to ever-lasting burnings also believe that God looked upon them as men fallen in Adam? And that the decree which ordained the punishment, first regarded the crime by which it was deserved? How then are they doomed without any preceding fault? Surely Mr. Wesley will own God's justice in imputing Adam's sin to his posterity, and also that after Adam's Fall, and his posterity in him, God might justly have passed them all by without sending His own Son to be a Saviour for anyone. Unless you heartily agree to both these points, you do not believe original sin aright. If you do own them, then you must acknowledge the doctrine of election and reprobation to be highly just and reasonable. For if God might justly impute Adam's sin to all and afterwards have passed all, then He might justly pass by some!" ¹

It was reasoning such as this which could lead Whitefield to say:

"I frankly acknowledge I believe the doctrine of reprobation in this view, that God intends to give saving grace through Jesus Christ only to a certain number, and that the rest of mankind, after the Fall of Adam, being justly left of God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages. This is the established doctrine of Scripture and acknowledged as such in the seventeenth article of the Church of England as Bishop Burnett himself confesses."²

Whitefield believed that the elect finally persevere. The doctrine of final perseverance is hinted at in the sixteenth article of the Church of England ("Of sin after Baptism"), which may imply the possibility of what the Westminster Confession of Faith states explicitly and what Whitefield held, viz., "that a Christian could not fall away finally from grace." As has been observed, he freely allowed that the regenerate may sin. Faced with the words of 1 John 5:18, he gave the explanation of "neither can he sin" as: "It does not imply the impossibility of a Christian's sinning, for we/

¹ Collected Works, vol.IV, p 67 f. See Wesley's answer to this, Works, vol. X, pp 217,223. But cf.also Whitefield's Sermons, p 505, where he says the elect are "loved from all eternity" (1760 plus?)

² Collected Works, vol.IV, p 58

we are told 'in many things we offend all'. It only means thus much: that a man who is really born of God doth not wilfully commit sin, much less live in the habitual practice of it."¹ This was Wesley's doctrine of "Perfection", in its negative aspect. But the point of dispute between Whitefield and Wesley over the sinfulness of man was whether the spiritually reborn can sin so far as to fall finally away from the grace of God. This is obviously the crux of the doctrine of final perseverance. It would seem that Whitefield, holding the belief in the irresistible grace of God as he did, gave a more Calvinistic interpretation of the sixteenth article than its terms warranted. In his "Journals" under date September 9, 1740, in a discussion already referred to above, is this:

"We talked a little about falling finally from grace. I said, 'A true child of God, though he might fall foully, yet could never fall finally'. 'But', said he, 'the Article says, Men may fall away from grace given'. I answered, 'But then observe what follows, And by the grace of God they may rise again.'" ²

But according to the Article, perseverance is not strictly certain - "by the grace of God they may rise again", not automatically they will rise again. It is no mere possibility of repentance that Whitefield is insisting upon. He says elsewhere:

"It is true that man that is born of God may through surprise or the violence of a temptation fall into an act of sin: witness the adultery of David and Peter's denial of his Master. But then, like them, he quickly rises again, goes out from the world and weeps bitterly, recovers his former peace by renewing his acts of faith on the perfect righteousness of Christ, takes double heed to his ways for the future and perfects holiness in the fear of God." ³

Whitefield/

¹ Sermons, p 438

² Wale, op.cit., p 460

³ Sermons, p 438, as amended by Whitefield later: see Collected Works, vol.IV, p 46

Whitefield would say that such a person was never out of the grace of God, because it is founded on the irresistible, everlasting and gracious love of God.

"Indeed, some people tell us that a person may be in Christ today and go to the devil tomorrow: but blessed be God, ye have not so learned Christ. 'There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus'. Though God's people may fall foully, though many are full of doubts and fears and say, 'One day I shall fall by the hands of Saul'.....yet no wicked devil, nor your own depraved hearts, shall be able to separate you from the love of God: God has loved you, God has fixed His heart upon you, and having loved His own, He loves them unto the end. The Lord of life and glory, the blessed Jesus, will never cease loving you till He hath loved you and brought you to Heaven."¹

I Cor. 1:30 supports this, for Christ is

"emphatically made of God the believer's 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption'. Were there no other text in the book of God, this single one sufficiently proves the final perseverance of true believers: for never did God justify a man whom He did not sanctify, nor yet sanctify one whom He did not completely redeem and glorify. No, as for God, His way, His work is perfect; He always carried out the work He began. Thus it was at the first, so it is now in the new Creation.....Those whom God has justified He has in effect glorified, for, as man's unworthiness was not the cause of God's giving him Christ's righteousness, so neither shall his unworthiness be a cause of His taking it away: God's gifts and callings are without repentance."²

It appears from Wesley's statement of belief in 1743 that he may have modified his refusal to believe in the absolute and final perseverance of believers - as he says then, "I am inclined to believe that there is a state attainable in this life from which a man cannot finally fall', etc. But there is no indication that Whitefield changed his opinion on this point."³

To/

¹ Sermons, p 167 f

² Ibid, p 458. Cf. supra p 88, for Christ's perseverance being imputed to believers; and also Sermons p 734

³ But see Sermons, p 619. Cf. also Wesley's Works, vol. X, p 209 f, where it is said Wesley and the Methodists leaned too much towards Calvinism in the early years.

To demonstrate how Wesley's attitude to all these doctrines altered during the years following the controversy, one can best quote this extract from a letter to a friend, May 14, 1765:

"You have admirably expressed what I mean by an opinion contra-distinguished from an essential doctrine. Whatever is compatible with love to Christ and a work of grace, I term an opinion. And certainly the holding particular election and final perseverance is compatible with these. 'Yet what fundamental errors', you ask, 'have you opposed with half that fervency as you have these opinions?' I have printed near fifty sermons, and only one opposes them at all. I preach about 800 sermons a year and taking one year with another, I have not preached eight sermons in a year upon the subject. But 'How many of your best preachers have been thrust out because they dissented from you in these particulars?' Not one, best or worst, good or bad was ever 'thrust out' on this account. Two or three (but far from the best of our preachers) voluntarily left us, after they had embraced those opinions. But it was of their own mere motion. 'Is a man a believer in Jesus Christ and is his life suitable to his profession?' are not only the main but the sole inquiries I make in order to his admission into our society."

His correspondent has said that if "perfection" was prevalent in "his parts", he would think it his duty to "oppose it with his whole strength, not as an opinion, but as a dangerous mistake which appears subversive of the very foundation of Christian experience and which has in fact given occasion to the most grievous offences." Wesley comments on this:

"Just so my brother and I reasoned thirty years ago, 'as thinking it our duty to oppose Predestination with our whole strength, not as an opinion but as a dangerous mistake...' etc. That it has given occasion for many offences I know. I can name time, place and persons. But still another fact stares me in the face. Mr. H--- and Mr. N----- hold this and yet I believe these have real Christian experience.....Yea, many hold it at whose feet I desire to be found in the day of the Lord Jesus. If then I oppose this with my whole strength, I am a bigot still."¹

If this was Wesley's account of how he regarded these doctrines/

¹ Wesley's Works, vol.III, p 211 f. Cf. Ibid, vol.XIII, p 400 ff. and vol.VIII, p 336 ff.

doctrines which had caused so many heart-burnings at one time, what was Whitefield's practice, taken over all, during the rest of the thirty years he had left to him after the open disputes had ceased? Did he preach his double decree consistently as a fundamental doctrine? Up to approximately 1763 he had published (always with careful revision) about sixty sermons - i.e. all those ever published except the eighteen which Gurney took down in shorthand somewhere between 1760 and 1770, and published after Whitefield's death.¹ In very few of these is there much reference to an extreme doctrine of predestination. Indeed from the sermons alone, it would be difficult to arrive at any strongly held view of Whitefield. There may have been and probably were many sermons preached from 1739 to 1741 directly on foreordination to damnation but none were published that are now extant or which were considered suitable to include in his collected works. What follows are some of the allusions in the sermons which we have. For instance, despite God's sovereign decrees, he says that all must give heed to the Gospel:

"Christ Jesus came to save sinners, the chief of them: you do not know but He came to save you. Do not quarrel with God's decrees and say, If I am reprobate I shall be damned, if I am elected I shall be saved, and therefore I will do nothing. What have you to do with God's decrees? Secret things belong to Him; it is your business to 'give all diligence to make your calling and election sure'. If there are but few that find the way to life, do you strive to be some of them. You know not but you may be in the number of those few and that your striving may be the means God intends to bless to give you entrance in."

It/

¹ See Tyerman, vol. II, p 565 (footnote), for an account of this publication and the dissatisfaction of Whitefield's executors therewith, leading to a public disclaimer of approval. However all who bought copies from Gurney were satisfied.

It is certain that the preacher would not have been nearly so successful if he had often repeated such doctrine, prefaced by the words: "The bare probability of having a door of mercy opened is enough to keep you striving."¹ The best comment on this type of utterance (which was followed by an invitation to come to Christ) is given in Charles Wesley's words, although it must be remembered that he was at the time bitterly opposed to Whitefield's doctrine. A friend of Charles Wesley heard Whitefield preach and wrote to Wesley about it. This is what the latter recorded in his "Journal":

"The people fled from the reprobating lion. But again and again as he observed them depart, the preacher of sad tidings called them back with general offers of salvation. Vain and empty offers indeed! What availed his telling them that, for aught he knew, they might be all elect? He did not believe them all elect; he could not; therefore he only mocked them with an empty word of invitation, and if God sent him to preach the Gospel to every creature, God, according to his scheme, sent him to deceive the greatest part of mankind."²

It is certainly true that Whitefield offered the Gospel to all, just as the Wesleys did. Even when he was imbibing Calvinism, he continued to aim at this. On his way to America in 1739, he prays: "Lord grant that I may become all things to all men that I may gain some, and preach the Gospel in every place and every manner, as well as to every creature."³ Addressing the reader of his "Short Account" (1740), he says: "Let God's goodness to me lead thee also to repentance. The same Lord is rich unto all who call upon Him through faith in Jesus Christ."⁴ Whatever their ultimate fate, he says he has to/

1 Sermons, p 421 (after 1739 and before 1760). Note: Whitefield still believed this about 1765 (see Sermons, pp 629-631) and also in 1768 (see *ibid*, p 638 f.)

2 Journal, vol. I, p 272

3 *Wale. op.cit.*, p 339

4 *Ibid*, p 62

to preach to all sinners because God, the Author of repentance and the new birth, uses instruments such as himself for His purposes: "sometimes the instruments are very unlikely: a poor despised minister or a member of Jesus Christ may, by the power of God, be made an instrument in the hands of God of bringing you to true evangelical repentance."¹ Hence he adopted the Wesleyan dictum as his own: "The whole world is now my parish!"² It seems the truth that, admitting his occasional statements of strict Calvinism, Whitefield largely forgot his doctrinal views when pleading before men. In spite of his ^{not} opinions, he could / help his great love for Christ and his love for his fellowmen driving him to offer salvation to all. The overwhelming witness he made was on the side of the reality of free pardon and newness of life to all who chose to come to God through Christ in faith. The following are examples. In 1739 he said:

"O fly, fly unto the lord Jesus Christ. I invite you all to accept of him. I offer Christ to the greatest profligate on earth. Surely there are none can say I preach damnation now. They cannot say I am sending you all to hell now. No, my brethren, I preach salvation to all of you who will come and accept the Lord Jesus Christ. O I know not how to leave you, without some hopes of your coming to Him!"³

Again in 1763:

"Blessed be God that when I first entered into the field.....I proclaimed the grace of God to the worst of sinners, and I proclaim it now to the vilest sinner under Heaven. Could I speak so loud as that the whole world might hear me, I would declare that the grace of God is free for all poor souls that are willing to accept of it by Christ; God make you all willing this day."⁴

These/

1 Sermons, p 329

2 Collected Works, vol. I, p 105

3 From a sermon preached 1739, published 1740 - see Tyerman, op.cit., vol. I, p 304

4 Sermons, p 579

These are only two instances widely separated in time, where Whitefield makes an open invitation; but the final peroration of every sermon contains long passages similar in spirit and intention. Thus his Calvinism did not interfere with his missionary zeal.¹

.....

The Cross of Christ.

When Whitefield was offering salvation to men, he invariably pointed them to the Cross of Christ, and it was then that the fire kindled in his heart and he forgot his Calvinistic limitations. Behind all the work of God in Christ, however Whitefield might explicate that work, stands the means by which it was accomplished. This means was essentially the death on the Cross and the Resurrection following.

"It was His dying that brought you life; it was His crucifixion which paid the satisfaction for your sins; His death, burial and resurrection that completed the work: and He is now in Heaven interceding for you at the right hand of His Father." ²

Behind all the impassioned oratory there is of course the theology: Christ's sufferings and death were in penal substitution for what man could not possibly do or suffer for his sins. The eternal compact or covenant between the Father and the Son has been already referred to.³

The necessity of the Cross was man's sin:

"Now as man had sinned and a satisfaction was demanded, it was impossible for a finite creature to satisfy Him who was God of so strict a purity as not to behold iniquity; and man by the justice of God would have been sent down the pit which was/

¹ Cf. References to the "heathen" peoples of the world, e.g. Wale, op.cit., p 417, and Sermons, pp 167, 539, 540.
See also philanthropies for Negroes and Indians noted in Chapter I, supra p 22

² Sermons, p 336

³ "If he would obey and suffer and make himself a sacrifice for sin, he should see his seed..."etc

was prepared of old for the devil and his angels; but when justice was going to pass the irrevocable sentence, then the Lord Jesus Christ came and offered Himself a ransom for poor sinners. Here was admirable condescension of the Lord Jesus Christ! - that He who was in the bosom of the Father should come down from all that glory to die for such rebels as you and I are, who, if it lay in our power, would pull the Almighty from His throne. Now, can you think that if there were no need of Christ's death, can you think that if there could have been any other ransom found, whereby poor sinners might have been saved, God would not have spared His only begotten Son, and not delivered Him up for all that believe in Him?..... Nothing short of the blood of Jesus applied to your souls will make you happy to all eternity."¹

Thus God's justice demands a punishment and Christ undergoes it in man's stead:

"Jesus offers to die to make atonement for his (man's) transgression and to fulfill all righteousness in his stead.... In this body (of Jesus) He performed a complete obedience to the law of God; whereby He in our stead fulfilled the covenant of works, and at last became subject to death, even the death upon the Cross: that as God He might satisfy, as man He might obey and suffer; and being God and man in one person, might once more procure a union between God and our souls."²

Whitefield is very conscious of the sufferings of Christ, both physical and spiritual. There is not the slightest suggestion that both as man and as God, Christ did not suffer in very truth. The following proves this, as well as showing the legal and penal nature of these sufferings:

"If you can bear to be spectators of such an awful tragedy, I must now entreat you to enter the Garden of Gethsemane. But stop! what is that we see? Behold the Lamb of God undergoing the most direful tortures of vindictive wrath! Of the people, even of His disciples, there is none with Him. Alas! was ever sorrow like unto that sorrow, wherewith His innocent soul was afflicted in this day of His Father's fierce anger? Before He entered into this bitter passion, out of the fulness of His heart He said, 'Now is my soul troubled'. But how is it troubled? His agony bespeaks it to be 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death'. It extorts sweat, yea a bloody sweat. His face, His hands, His garments, are all stained with blood. It extorts strong cryings and many tears. See how the Incarnate Deity now lies prostrate before His Father, who now laid on Him the iniquities of us all! See, how He agonizes in prayer! Hark! Again and again He addresses His Father with an/

¹ Sermons, p 515

² Ibid, p 245

an 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me'. Tell me, ye blessed angels, tell me, Gabriel (or whatever thou art called) who wast sent from Heaven in this important hour to strengthen our agonizing Lord - tell me, if you can, what Christ endured in this dark and doleful night! And tell me, tell me what you yourselves felt when you heard this same God-man, whilst expiring on the accursed tree, breaking forth into that dolorous, unheard-of expostulation, 'My God, my God, why or how hast thou forsaken me?' Were you not all struck dumb? And did not an awful silence fill Heaven itself when God the Father said unto His sword, 'Sword, smite thy fellow'? Well might nature put on its sable weeds. Well might the rocks rend to show their sympathy with a suffering Saviour. And well might the sun withdraw its light, as though shocked and confounded to see its Maker die!"¹

Whitefield with his powerful imaginative gifts no doubt saw it all, almost as if it were taking place before his eyes, and caused his listeners in some measure to share in the vision. The above is typical of his preaching style.

He refers again and again to that love of Christ which prompted Him to die for sinners on the Cross:

"Let me exhort you once more to consider the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. O do not forget His love. Consider, I beseech you, how great it has been unto you, and do not slight this His grace, the riches, the love, the kindness of your dear Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ who hath prepared this rest for you: He also laid down His life for your sakes. What love was here! that while you were enemies to the Lord of glory, He died for you, to redeem you from sin, from hell and wrath, that you might live and reign with Him, world without end."²

Such a love, he says, should never lead men to despair of mercy:

"And can any poor, truly-convicted sinner, after this, despair of mercy? What, can they see the Saviour hanging on a tree, with arms stretched out ready to embrace them, and yet on their truly believing on Him, doubt of finding acceptance with Him?Look on His hands, bored with pins of iron; look/

¹ Sermon, "Behold the Lamb of God", quoted by Tyerman, op.cit., vol.II, p 296

² Sermons, p 559. Cf. p 477, where the love of the Father in the Cross is spoken of.

look on His side, pierced with a cruel spear to let loose the sluices of His blood and open a fountain for sin and all uncleanness, and then despair of mercy if you can!"¹

The love revealed therein was what caused Jesus to come into this world, but it also sets a new value on the human soul:

"It was love to immortal souls that brought the blessed Jesus among us. And O that we might hence consider how great the value of souls was and is: it is that which made Jesus to bleed, pant, and die. And surely souls must be of infinite worth which made the Lamb of God to die so shameful a death."²

The Cross should surely excite those who behold it to a love for Christ, and to strength in face of any affliction or persecution. Whitefield says:

"O how will it fill our souls with love, to think that through the streams of His blood, we have overcome the violence of the world and the snares of the devil. Be not discouraged with the treatment that you meet with here, but let it be a means to stir you up to advance in the love of Jesus Christ, who hath prepared a rest for you"(Hebrews 4:9). "Can you consider what Christ hath done and suffered for you, and have your hearts stupified with vile and senseless pleasures? Can you hear of a panting, bleeding, dying Jesus, and yet be dull and unaffected?.....Think of the love of this your Jesus, and then will a little reproach and scorn move you? Sure it will not. I hope better things of you and things that accompany salvation"³

Whitefield held that the "offence" of the Cross was not to be shunned. The grace of Christ and the Cross are connected, as he wrote to a friend in October, 1766:

"The love of Christ constrains me to wish you joy. Of what? Of being made partaker of the grace and Cross of Christ. You will find that both are inseparably connected."⁴

"It is bad, more than bad, when the offence of the Cross ceaseth", he said in another letter. "This cannot be till we cease to be crucified to the world and the world crucified to us: and when that is the case, things are very bad."⁵
That/

1 Sermons, p 477

2 Ibid, p 483

3 Ibid, p 557 f

4 Quoted by Tyerman, op.cit.,vol.II, p 498

5 Collected Works, vol.III, p 412

That he could say at the end of his life in 1770, a life spent in strenuous proclamation of the Cross of Christ.

Finally it has been said that Whitefield saw the inevitable necessity of the Resurrection as the completion of the work on the Cross.

"Now had Christ continued always in the grave, we could have had no more assurance that our sins were satisfied for, than any common debtor can have of his creditor's being satisfied, whilst his surety is kept confined. But, He being released from the power of death, we are thereby assured that with His sacrifice, God was well pleased, that our atonement was finished on the Cross, and that He hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the world."¹

That was his logical explanation for the Resurrection, from the point of view of man's redemption. By dying and rising again, "He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

1 Sermons, p 532

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

A. Man as He was Created.

Man, together with this world and the rest of the universe, was created by God in strict accordance with the story as it is given in the opening chapters of the book of Genesis. The words concerning the creation of man in Chapter 1:26 f. were taken quite literally by Whitefield and elaborated upon again and again. A characteristic account of man's original creation "in the image" and "after the likeness" of God is:

"For thus stands the case between God and man. God at first made man upright, or as the sacred penman expresses it: 'In the image of God made he man'; that is, his soul was the very copy, the transcript of the Divine nature. He who before, by His almighty fiat, spake the world into being, breathed into man the breath of spiritual life, and his soul was adorned with a resemblance of the (moral communicable¹) perfections of the Deity. This was the finishing stroke of creation: the perfection both of the moral and the material world.² And so near did man resemble his Divine original, that God could not but rejoice and take pleasure in His own likeness: And therefore we read, that when God finished the inanimate and brutish part of creation, He looked upon and beheld 'it was good'; but when that lovely, God-like creature, man, was made, behold 'it was very good'".³

The state of man thus formed was felicitous: "Happy, unspeakably happy, must man needs be, when thus a partaker of the Divine nature".⁴ This state was conditional. Man was placed on probation in the Garden of Eden - the penalty for disobedience to be not only temporal but also 'spiritual death', "and consequently, to/

1 These words were inserted by Whitefield when the Presbyterian "Querists" in America, already referred to, challenged many terms and phrases in Whitefield's early published sermons and Journals -see Collected Works, vol.IV, p 46.

2 "Moral and material" were later altered to "visible" -loc.cit.

3 Sermons, p 436. Cf. p 688

4 Ibid, p 436

to lose that Divine image, that spiritual life God had not long breathed into him, and which was as much his happiness as his glory."¹

The pronouns "us" and "our" in Genesis 1:26 ("Let us make man in our image....."), Whitefield explains as follows:

"A council of the most adorable Trinity was called on this important occasion: God did not say, 'Let there be a man, and there was a man', but God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" ²

Dealing with the bodily creation of man, Whitefield insists on his humble origin, and the wisdom and power of God in forming him of such materials. He says:

"For God originally made him of the 'dust of the earth'. So that, notwithstanding our boasting of our high pedigrees and different descent, we were all originally upon a level, and a little red earth was the common substratum out of which we were all formed. Clay indeed it was, but clay wonderfully modified, even by the immediate hands of the Creator of Heaven and earth. One therefore hath observed that it is said, 'God built the man': He did not form him rashly or hastily, but built and finished him according to the plan before laid down in His own eternal mind. And though, as the great God is without body, part, or passions, we cannot suppose when it is said, 'God made man after His own image', that it has any reference to His body, yet I cannot help thinking (with Dr. South) that, as the eternal Logos was hereafter to appear, God manifest in the flesh, infinite wisdom was undoubtedly exerted in forming a casket into which so invaluable a pearl was in the fullness of time to be deposited. Some of the ancients are said to have asserted that man at the first had what we call a glory shining round him; but without attempting to be wise above what is written, we may venture to affirm that he had a glorious body, which, knowing no sin, knew neither sickness nor pain."³

Man was certainly righteous in this first state, according to Whitefield: "We could not come thus corrupt out of the hands of our Maker, because He, being goodness itself, could make nothing but/

¹ Sermons, p 436. Cf pp 136 ff, 464 f.

² Ibid, p 136. Cf p 505, where it is stated that the same Trinity consults to bring about man's redemption,

³ Ibid, p 140 f

but what is like Himself, holy, just, and good."¹

The purpose of Christ's Incarnation was to bring back this primeval dignity to man, "to restore us to that primitive dignity in which we were at first created."

"Accordingly, He shed His precious blood to satisfy the Father's justice for our sins, and thereby also He procured for us the Holy Ghost, who should once more re-instamp the Divine image upon our hearts and make us capable of living with and enjoying the blessed God."²

Little is said of Christ being the true image of God made flesh in man, as Hebrews 1:3 sets forth ("Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person"). But it is observed that in the quotation above, man's body at the beginning is considered a worthy habitation of that Logos whose advent in the flesh was foreseen by God at the creation of man.

It is to be noted that Whitefield says that the only reason the world continues to exist is that a sufficient number of people for God's purposes have not yet received the Divine image. When that happens, "the heavens shall be wrapped up like a scroll, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth and all that therein is, shall be burnt up."³

It can thus be seen that Whitefield maintained the orthodox doctrine of man's original excellence and happiness at his creation by God in His own image.

.....

B. Man as He is Now: A Sinner

All preaching and writing about man is done upon the assumption that man has fallen from this exalted state of having been created in God's image. Once again, what the book of

Genesis/

1 Sermons, p 380

2 Ibid, p 437. Cf. p 691

3 Ibid, p 437

Genesis has to say on this point is accepted as historically true.¹
 This may be seen by a small issue, viz. the consideration given by
 Whitefield to the time of the Fall of Adam:

"How soon man fell after he was created is not told us: and therefore to fix any time is to be wise above what is written. And I think that those who suppose that man fell the same day in which he was made, have no sufficient ground for their opinion. The many things which are crowded together in the former chapter (Genesis 2), such as the formation of Adam's wife, his giving names to the beasts and his being put into the garden which God had planted, I think require a longer space of time than a day to be transacted in. However all agree in this, 'that man stood not long'.....It more concerns us how he came to fall from his steadfastness, and what was the rise and progress of the temptation which prevailed over him."²

After recapitulating and commenting on the Genesis story to Chapter 3:6, he considers what was the nature of the wrongdoing of Adam and Eve. He says:

"What a complication of crimes was there in this one single act of sin! Here is an utter disbelief in God's threatening; the uttermost ingratitude to their Maker, who had so lately planted this garden and placed them in it with such a glorious and comprehensive charter. And the utmost neglect of their posterity, who they knew were to stand or fall with them. Here was the utmost pride of heart: they wanted to be equal with God. Here is the uttermost contempt put upon His threatening and His law: the devil is credited and obeyed before Him, and all this only to satisfy their sensual appetite.....Nothing but the devil's apostacy and rebellion could equal it."

In this we have the first sin as disbelief in God's power, ingratitude, selfishness, pride, rebellious disobedience of His express law, and the following, in a positive fashion, of evil and lust. All these different things, each one of which has at one time or another been held in the history of Christianity to constitute the chief content of sin, Whitefield could see in the Fall of Adam and Eve on the temptation of the devil.

God's/

¹ In the following remarks on the momentous occurrence of the Fall, the sermon, "The Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent", is the basis of the study (Sermons, pp 1-13)

² Cf. with this, Sermons, p 688

God's goodness and omnipotence are justified despite the Fall, because He had created men with free will: "God made man upright and with full power to stand if he would. He was just therefore in suffering him to be tempted. If he fell he had no one to blame but himself." One of the results of the Fall is that man, now filled with pride, seeks to blame his Maker for his own sinfulness.¹ Man sinned voluntarily in Whitefield's view, but where he says this, he makes no attempt to reconcile this belief with the doctrine that all happens in accordance with God's eternal decrees. Although Whitefield nowhere explicitly says so, one is forced to conclude that his doctrine of predestination was sublapsarian.

What were the consequences of the Fall? Here Whitefield encountered opposition from his optimistic contemporaries who repeatedly charged him with painting too black a picture of unregenerate man. Their chief complaint was directed against his use of the words, "a mixture of the brute and the devil", to describe man's present state. Eighteenth century rationalists and Latitudinarians were rediscovering a Hellenistic nobility in man because of his reason. Against this, Whitefield denounces man's pretentiousness, in view of the Fall. Upon the latter, men were:

"naked of God, naked of everything that was holy and good, and destitute of the Divine image which before they enjoyed. They might rightly now be termed Ichabod, for the glory of the Lord departed from them. O how did those sons of the morning then fall out of God into themselves; from being partakers of the Divine nature, into the nature of the devil and the beast.....naked not only/

1 Cf. this in Sermons, p 6, with Wale, op.cit., p 33, which Whitefield amended in the 1756 edition.

only in body but in soul."¹

They now knew a hatred of God: "By their Fall they had contracted an enmity against God: they now hated and were afraid to converse with God their Maker."² Obviously Whitefield has here gone further than the Reformers. They regarded the image of God in man as mutilated but not utterly destroyed by the Fall. There yet "remained nothing but a ruin, confused, mutilated, and tainted with impurity."³ But Whitefield insists on Man's total depravity. At different times he elaborates on the separate parts of man's nature and draws the contrast between man's original state and his present one, showing how this difference supports a doctrine of the Fall and the theory of "original sin", or a depravity inherited by all men who are the "naturally engendered offspring" of Adam.

Firstly, consider, he says, man's understanding:

"As man was created originally 'after God in knowledge' as well as righteousness and true holiness, we may rationally infer that his understanding, in respect to things natural as well as Divine, was a prodigious extent: for he was made but a little lower than the angels, and consequently, being, like them, excellent in his understanding, he knew much of God, of himself, and all about him.....but this is far from being the case now. For in respect to natural things, our understandings are evidently darkened. It is but little that we can know, and even that little knowledge which we can acquire, is with much weariness of the flesh, and we are doomed to gain it as we do our daily bread, I mean, by the sweat of our brows.....If we view our understandings in respect to spiritual things, we shall find that they are not only darkened, but become darkness itself, even 'darkness that may be felt' by all who are not past feeling."

Or consider, secondly, the "perverse bent" of man's will.

Whitefield says:

"Being made in the image of God, undoubtedly before the Fall/

¹ See also Sermons, p 690. B. Franklin comments: "It was a matter of speculation to me to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory upon his hearers, and how much they admired and respected him, notwithstanding his common abuse of them by assuring them they were naturally 'half beasts and half devils'". ("Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin", p 128)

² See also Sermons, pp 328, 436

³ Calvin's Institutes, Book I.xv. 4

Fall, man had no other will but his Maker's. God's will and Adam's were like unisons in music.....but now he hath a will as directly contrary to the will of God, as light is contrary to darkness."

Also, man's "affections", "at his being first placed in the paradise of God, were always kept within proper bounds, fixed upon their proper objects." Then came the Fall.

"But now the scene is changed. For we are now naturally full of vile affections.....We love what we should hate and hate what we should love; we fear what we should hope for, and hope for what we should fear; nay, to such an ungovernable height do our affections sometimes rise, that though our judgments are convinced to the contrary, yet will we gratify our passions, though it be at the expence of our present and eternal welfare."

The "present blindness of natural conscience" is evident:

"In the soul of the first man, Adam, conscience was no doubt the candle of the Lord, and enabled him rightly and instantaneously to discern between good and evil, right and wrong. Some remains of this are yet left; but alas, how dimly does it burn, and how easily and quickly it is covered, or put out and extinguished."

Nor is "unassisted, unenlightened human reason" less unaffected, although reason is not to be decried ("His service is a reasonable service").¹ It must be remembered constantly that

"the horrid and dreadful mistakes which the most refined reasoners in the heathen world ran into, both as to the object as well as the manner of Divine worship, have sufficiently demonstrated the weakness and depravity of human reason."

Man's "present disordered frame and the constitution of our bodies" are a result of the Fall,

"for (the body's) primitive strength and glory are sadly departed from it, and like the ruins of some ancient and stately fabric, only so much left as to give us some faint idea of what it/

¹ Cf. Sermons, p 525: "Reason is the glory of a man, the chief thing whereby God has made us to differ from the brute creation. And our modern unbelievers have exalted it to such a high degree as even to set it in opposition to revelation, and so deny the Lord that bought them. But though in doing this, they greatly err, and whilst they profess themselves wise become real fools, yet we must acknowledge that reason is the candle of the Lord and whosoever puts it out shall bear his punishment whosoever he be."

it was when it first appeared in its original and perfect beauty. The Apostle Paul, who knew how to call things by their proper names as well as any man living, does not scruple to term the human body, though in its original constitution, fearfully and wonderfully made, a 'vile body'; vile indeed! since it is subject to such vile diseases, put to such vile, yea very vile, uses, and at length is to come to so vile an end: 'for dust we are and to dust we must return.'¹

At the grave of Lazarus, amongst other considerations, Jesus wept "to see human nature, through man's own default, thus laid in ruins, by being subject unto such a dissolution, made like unto the beasts that perish."²

To Whitefield, the disorder in the natural world was a counterpart to this human disorder upon the Fall:

"The unhappy mutiny and disorder which the visible creation fell into, the briars and thorns which now sprang up and overspread the earth, were but poor emblems, lifeless representations, of that confusion and rebellion and those divers lusts and passions which sprung in and quite overwhelmed the soul of man immediately after the Fall."³

All of the above analysis of the consequences of the Fall in man's nature and in creation, is used by Whitefield to prove that the first sin is imputed to succeeding generations, that "we are all equally conceived and born in sin; all are fallen short of the glory of God and liable to all the curses and maledictions of the law."⁴ God's justice in thus imputing Adam's sin to innocent posterity has been dealt with above.⁵ But directly bearing upon the doctrine of original sin, Whitefield adds to his review of man's nature further proofs as follows:

The doctrine is true because of the nature of God Himself.⁶ Under this head Whitefield employs the following analogy:

"For/

¹ Cf. Sermons, p 690

² For this analysis of man's nature, see Sermons, p 137 ff. and cf. with it Sermons, p 456 ff., where Christ's sanctifying work in the understanding, will, affections, etc. is dealt with

³ Sermons, p 436

⁴ Ibid, p 351. Cf p 690

⁵ See p 53 f. supra

⁶ See p 127 supra

"For let us but search our own hearts and ask ourselves if we could create our own children, whether or not we would create them with a less mixture of good and evil than we find in ourselves. Supposing God then only to have our goodness, He could not at first make us so sinful, so polluted as we are.....Man then could not have come out of the hands of his Maker so miserably 'blind and naked', with such a mixture of the beast and the devil as he now finds in himself, but must have fallen from what he was; and as it does not suit with the goodness and justice of God to punish the whole race of mankind with these disorders merely for nothing, it follows that as they could not sin themselves, being yet unborn, some other man's sin must have been imputed to them; from whence, as from a fountain, all these evils flow." ¹

The doctrine is true because the Word of God which is Scripture says so. ² St. Paul tells us "that 'in Adam all died', that is, Adam's sin was imputed to us all: and lest we should be tempted to forget to make a particular application, it is added in another place, 'that there is none that doeth good (that is, by nature), no, not one: that we are all gone out of the way (of original righteousness) and are by nature the children of wrath.'" Even David, who, being a man after God's own heart, might have claimed "exemption from this universal corruption", confesses that he was "shapen in iniquity" and that "in sin did his mother conceive him." ³ Whitefield claims that all he has to say on this doctrine is summed up in the article of the Church of England, Article 9, which he quotes with approval. ⁴

The doctrine is true because the nature of little children is what it is! On this head Whitefield makes an emphatic protest against "Arminians and others" who twist Scripture to prove the doctrine false. He speaks at length:

"Though the doctrine of original sin is a doctrine written in such legible characters in the Word of God that he who runs may read it.....yet there are too many persons who have been baptized in the name of Christ, that dare to speak against the doctrine/

¹ Sermons, p 465. See also p 436

² See p 66 f. supra

³ Sermons, p 472

⁴ Loc. cit. Cf. pp 380, 391

doctrine of original sin, and are angry with those ill-natured ministers who paint man in such black colours! Say they, 'It cannot be that children come into the world with Adam's sin lying upon them.' Why? Desire them to prove it from Scripture and they will urge this very text, that our Lord tells us, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven'. Now their argument runs thus: 'It is implied in the words of the text that little children are innocent, and that they come into the world like a mere blank piece of paper, otherwise our Lord must argue absurdly, for He could never pretend to say that we must be converted and be made like wicked creatures: that would be no conversion'. But this is to make Jesus Christ speak what He never intended and what cannot be deduced from His words. That little children are guilty, I mean, that they are conceived and born in sin, is plain from the whole tenor of the book of God." He quotes the customary texts from Scripture and then goes on: "And I appeal to any of you that are mothers and fathers, if ye do not discern original sin in your children as soon as they come into the world; and as they grow up, if ye do not discover self-will and an averseness to goodness.....So then it is plain from Scripture and fact that children are born in sin..... And for my part, I think that the death of every child is a plain proof of original sin; sickness and death came into the world by sin, and it seems not consistent with God's goodness and justice to let a child be sick or die unless Adam's first sin was imputed to him. If any charge God with injustice for imputing Adam's sin to a little child, behold we have gotten a second Adam to bring our children to."¹

Of course this is illogical in itself because Whitefield has not faced up to the fact that even the children brought to "the second Adam" often fall "sick or die". He proceeds:

"Therefore when our Lord says, 'unless ye are converted and become as little children', we are not to understand as though our Lord would insinuate that little children are perfectly innocent, but in a comparative, and, as I will show you by and by, in a rational sense. Little children are innocent compare them with grown people, but take them as they are, and as they came into the world, they have hearts that are sensual and minds which are carnal."

Whitefield's whole thought here is based on the biological solidarity of the race. To him the mere fact of being born means possessing original sin, as if it were a physical trait - he has no conception of sin which a child inherits by virtue of being born into a particular society or environment. This matter is of great/

¹ See also Sermons, pp 689-690

great practical concern to Whitefield, however, because, he says, those who do not appreciate it neglect their children's proper education.

"If parents were convinced that children's hearts were as bad as they are, you would never be fond of letting them go to balls, assemblies and plays, the natural tendency of which is to debauch their minds and make them children of the devil. If parents were convinced of this, I believe they would pray more when they bring their children to be baptized and would not make it a mere matter of form.....Is it not to be feared that thousands of children will appear at the great day before God and in presence of angels and men will say, 'Father and mother, next to the wickedness of mine own heart, I owe my damnation to your bad education of me?'"¹

Whitefield has been quoted extensively here in order to give an idea of the tone of his teaching regarding youth, and the style of his preaching on such a doctrine as original sin.

In the existence of unbelief and infidelity, Whitefield saw a further evidence of the truth of the doctrine. In the sermon quoted just above, the heathen are said to have noted the existence and experienced the effects of original sin, yet they do not know the "cause of it".² "None of us believe by nature".³ "The light of conscience will accuse or convince us of any common sin but the light of natural conscience never did, never will, and never can convince of unbelief. If it could, how comes it to pass that not one of the heathen who improved the light of nature in such an eminent degree was ever convinced of unbelief? No, it is the peculiar property of the Holy Ghost."⁴

Finally, men's own experience of failure and of striving nevertheless for better things, is a proof of the doctrine of original sin. Whitefield appeals
"to/

1 Sermons, pp 231-233. See also p 698

2 Loc. cit., p 231

3 Ibid, p 416

4 Ibid, p 417. Cf. p 473

"to the experience of the most learned disputer against Divine revelation, whether he does not find in himself that he is naturally proud, angry, revengeful, and full of passions contrary to the purity, holiness, and longsuffering of God. And is not this a demonstration that some way he is fallen from God? And I appeal also whether, at the same time that he finds these hurtful lusts in his heart, he does not strive to seem amiable, courteous, kind and affable, and is not this a manifest proof, that he is sensible he is miserable and wants, he knows not how, to be redeemed and delivered from it?"¹

Here Whitefield was undoubtedly on surer ground in his proofs or arguments.

The belief dealt with so fully in this fashion by Whitefield was defined as the "foundation", the basis of all other great doctrines: "But woe to them that deny that they are born in sin.....for it saps the very foundation of the Christian religion."² For instance, it explains the necessity for any Divine revelation at all. As Whitefield says, "(man), without an external revelation, could never tell how God would be reconciled to him, or how he should be saved from the misery and darkness of his fallen nature".³ Hence it also affects the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. The necessity for the Incarnation and the Atonement of Christ is based on original sin:

"Here then appears the end and design why Christ was manifested in the flesh: to put an end to these disorders and restore to us that primitive dignity in which we were created. Accordingly He shed His precious blood to satisfy the Father's justice for sin; and thereby also He procured for us the Holy Ghost."⁴

Original sin demands the existence of Christ before His actual birth. "Behold the goodness, as well as the severity of God! for no sooner had man been convicted a sinner, but lo! a Saviour is revealed to him, under the character of 'the seed of the woman'".⁵ The doctrine of regeneration or the new birth rests upon/

¹ Sermons, p 380. Cf. pp 391, 436

² Wale, op.cit., p 231. Cf. Sermons, p 688

³ Sermons, p 380

⁴ Ibid, p 436. See also p 461

⁵ Ibid, p 464

upon the fact of man's total depravity:

"He (Dr. Stebbing) seems to know no more of the true nature of regeneration than Nicodemus did when he came to Jesus by night.....He does not speak a word of original sin, or the dreadful consequences of our fall in Adam, upon which the doctrine of the New Birth is entirely founded. No: like other polite preachers, he seems to think that St. Paul's description of the wickedness of the heathen (Epistle to the Romans) is only to be referred to them of past ages: whereas I affirm we are all included as much under the guilt and consequences of sin as they were."¹

As the Holy Spirit as the "agent" of the New Birth (see p 81 supra), it follows that the doctrine of original sin leads the true hearer of the Word to see the necessity of welcoming the third person of the Trinity into his heart: "If it be true that we are all by nature since the Fall a mixture of brute and devil, it is evident that we must all receive the Holy Ghost ere we can dwell with and enjoy God."² When, however, man has received the Holy Spirit, He becomes the means of confuting all arguments against the doctrine of original sin:

"But when the Comforter, the Spirit of God, arrests a sinner and convinces him of sin, all carnal reasoning against original corruption, every proud and high imagination which exalteth itself against the doctrine, is immediately thrown down; and he is made to cry out, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'"³

Finally, the basic fact underlying the urgent need for self-surrender and self-consecration to God of all that man is and possesses, is original sin:

"Were we indeed in a state of innocence and had we, like Adam before his fall, the Divine image stamped upon our souls, we should have no need of self-denial; but since we are fallen, sickly, disordered, self-righteous creatures, we must necessarily deny ourselves (and count it our privilege to do so) ere we can follow Jesus Christ to glory."⁴

This inherited depravity, this inborn perverseness and propensity to sin, which is "original sin", Whitefield distinguishes-

¹ -es/
¹ -Wale, op.cit., p 296

² Sermons, p 392

³ Ibid, p 414

⁴ Ibid, p 298

-es from "actual sin". An actual sin is a word, thought, or a deed contrary to God's laws, natural and revealed, which has come to full fruition in the life of the man who has been born into the world with a natural propensity to sin. This propensity has led him to be, not merely a "potential" sinner, but inevitably, apart from God's grace, an actual sinner.

"The Spirit of God generally.....first convinces them (sinners) of some heinous actual sin, and at the same time, brings all their other sins into remembrance."

For example, Jesus in conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1 ff.), challenged her with and convicted her of the sin of adultery, and "with this, there went a powerful conviction of all her other actual sins....."

Original sin is the "sin of man's nature" but actual sin is the "sin of his life". The former is "the fountain from which all these (latter) polluted streams flow".¹ The difference is seen in the Church of England doctrine of infant baptism also. According to the Articles, regeneration takes place on baptism, and a rubric to the "Order for the Administration of Baptism" in the Prayer Book states that, if the child dies before the commission of "actual sin", then it is undoubtedly saved. It seems certain that Whitefield questioned the Church of England doctrine on this particular embodiment of the distinction between "original" and "actual" sin.²

What were the actual sins of which Whitefield accused his congregations?

They/

1 Sermons, p 414 f

2 ~~W~~ale, op.cit., p 459 f

They include transgressions against the natural law ("the law written in the heart") and against the "written" law ("the law given by Moses"). There are the grosser sins of the senses: "Our senses are the landing ports of our spiritual enemies."¹ Thus he addresses an audience:

"You who have been swearers and cursers, you who have been harlots and drunkards, you who have been thieves and robbers, you who have hitherto followed the sinful pleasures and diversions of life, let me beseech you....!"²

Here is another list such as one finds in St. Paul's Epistles but brought up to date for the eighteenth century; speaking of God's judgment, he says:

"Then all thy lies and oaths, thy scoffs and jeers at the people of God, all thy filthy and unclean thoughts and actions, thy misspent time in balls, plays, and assemblies, thy spending whole evenings at cards, dice, and masquerades, thy frequenting of taverns and alehouses, thy worldliness, covetousness and uncharitableness, will be brought at once to thy remembrance and at once charged upon thy guilty soul."³

In this series of "sins" are a number of which he often accused the members of "polite society", including his wealthy and well-born listeners at the "spiritual routs" of Lady Huntingdon.⁴ Balls, plays, "assemblies", cards, dice and "masquerades" indeed took up a large proportion of the interest and time of the fashionable classes. Some apparently complained of a want of time or energy for religion, but Whitefield says: "Have you not as much power to go to hear a sermon as to go to a playhouse or to a ball or masquerade? You have as much power to read the Bible as to read plays, novels and romances."⁵ Much more Whitefield had to say in this strain.⁶ It will be observed also/

¹ Sermons, p 4

² Ibid, p 328

³ Ibid, p 332

⁴ Ibid, p 257

⁵ Ibid, p 334. Also p 227 and Wale, op.cit., p 363

⁶ See Tyerman, op. cit., vol.I, p 298 ff.

also that in the list of wrongful practices mentioned is the sin of "scoffing and jeering at the people of God" - by whom of course, Whitefield meant himself and all his "enthusiastic" colleagues, Methodist or otherwise.¹ "Have you been blasphemers and persecutors of the saints and servants of God?" he asks. "So was St. Paul, yet he received mercy." Swearing of course was a very common "sin". He preached a sermon on "The Heinous Sin of Profane Cursing and Swearing" very early in his ministry, with quite noticeable results. On this topic and on that of drunkenness, Whitefield did not fail to hit hard, and yet his hearers did not seem to be offended.² A great deal of Whitefield's denunciads of "actual sins" reveal the conditions of the age in which he lived (see Chapter One supra).

In pressing the necessity for a full doctrine of the New Birth, Whitefield draws attention to what he calls the "sin of a man's duties". This is proud, self-righteous Pharisaism. He describes it thus:

"We all naturally are legalists, thinking to be justified by the works of the law. When somewhat awakened by the terrors of the Lord, we immediately, like the Pharisees of old, go about to establish our own righteousness, and think we shall find acceptance with God, if we seek it with tears. Finding ourselves damned by our nature and our actual sins, we then think to recommend ourselves to God by our duties, and hope by our own doings of one kind or another to inherit eternal life."

Addressing all such as these, he says:

"You do your endeavours and Jesus is to make up the rest. You esteem yourselves fine, rational and polite beings, and think it is unfashionable to pray."

Such people, if aware of their real state, would act differently. He asserts that

"you would no more flatter yourselves with your abilities and good wishes.....You would see how unable you are to save yourselves/

1 Sermons, p 331. See Wale, op.cit., p 36 for Whitefield's own experience.

2 Sermons, p 188 ff. and p 522 f

yourselves.....Ye Pharisees, who are going about to establish your own righteousness; who are too polite to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth; who are all for a little show, a little outside work; who lead moral, civil, decent lives, Christ will not know you at the great day!"¹

This type of sin Whitefield was always denouncing in face of the formalism he encountered. It has been more fully considered in connection with the work of Christ (see p 74 f. supra).

Finally Whitefield himself sums up all these classes of sin in the "sin of unbelief" - a "sin which alone (it is very remarkable) our Lord mentions", i.e. in John 16:9, "as though it were the root of all other sins whatsoever; it is the reigning as well as the damning sin of the world.....It is that cursed sin, that root of all other evils." Apparently, most congregations he met were guilty of this sin to some extent, because he defined "belief" as far more than "repeating the creed, subscribing to a Confession of Faith, going to Church, and receiving the Sacrament, "etc. To be a true believer one has also to know the exact time when one first believed on Jesus Christ. Many of those he addressed must have reckoned as others have done in every age: "They dream they are Christians because they live in a Christian country.....What is that which men commonly call faith, but an outward consent to the established religion?" It takes the Holy Spirit to convince a man of this particular and noteworthy sin - natural conscience is incapable of doing it. The Spirit shows the sinner that, contrary to his own opinion, he really has no faith, and he is then led to cry out, "Lord, give me faith; Lord, give me to believe on Thee!"² To possible objectors to this view, that is, who say that this very cry could never come from a position/

¹ Sermons, p 212

² Ibid, p 416 f

position of unbelief and that no man can overcome the sin of unbelief and come to Christ unless God draw him by His Spirit, and that therefore no man should be censured for it, Whitefield would have no answer. In practice it appears that he held God's part in belief and man's part in it together - he would not have been able to deny either completely.

The sin of unbelief leads to "deadness". It is closely linked with pride that will not submit itself to the will of God.

"Hence we may trace infidelity to its fountainhead: for it is nothing else but a pride of the understanding, an unwillingness to submit to the truths of God." ¹

It has been noted already that pride and unbelief were elements in the sin of Adam and Eve at the Fall. What is the consequence of an unrepentant disbelief at death?

"While thy sins are not repented of, thou art in danger of death, and if you should die, you would perish forever. There is no hope for any who live and die in their sins, but that they will dwell with devils and damned spirits to all eternity." ²

.....

Whitefield faced up to the problem of suffering on the part of believers. This he regarded as a Divinely-sent preventative for the sin of pride. After illness, he says:

"It is good for me that I have been a little chastised; for who knows but I might have otherwise perished by being lifted up above measure with my last success? Lord, give me humility, though it be through sufferings."

A little further on in this Journal of a sea-voyage, after the time of his first rapid rise to fame in 1738, we read: "Now God has sent His visitations abroad among us" (many passengers were very sea-sick), "I hope we shall learn righteousness." ³
But/

¹ Sermons, p 294 f. Cf. pp 4, 473, 672. Note also, "Unbelief is the womb of misery and the grave of comfort", Wakely, op. cit., p 374.

² Sermons, p 331

³ Wale, op.cit., p 135. Cf. p 47 - asceticism, and illness as a result.

But trials, as he observed, have an effect on people differing according to their relation to Christ: "Those afflictions which harden the obstinately impenitent, soften and purify the heart of the true believer."¹ God is the Author of suffering to the extent that His justice and righteousness demand a penalty for wrongdoing, and as all are sinners, then all may be prepared to receive afflictions of one sort or another. Men make of them what they will: "God be praised, for sanctified afflictions are signs of special love", was a typical utterance of this man.² On a later occasion towards the end of his life, in a sermon on "The Furnace of Affliction", he shows that his views have not changed:

"Nothing proves the truth of grace and shews the love of God more, and you may be assured of it as you are of being in this place alive, that sanctified afflictions are the greatest evidence God can give you of His love."³

About the same period he said:

"We are often purged more in one hour by a good sound trial than by a thousand manifestations of His love. It is a fine thing to come purified, to come pardoned out of the furnace of affliction."⁴

What he means by this is exemplified in a letter written to one of his aristocratic friends when he heard of her illness:

"The regard I bear to you Ladyship constrains me to inform you that my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that this sickness may not be unto death but to His glory, and the present and eternal good of your better part, your precious and immortal soul. This is no doubt the end of afflictions: God's name and nature is love. He cannot therefore chastise us for any other purpose than that we may be made partakers of His holiness. Every cross and disappointment, every degree of pain, brings this important call with it, 'My son, my daughter, give me thy heart'. O that your Ladyship's soul may echo back, 'My heart, Lord Jesus, I will give.'" ⁵

.....

¹ Sermons, p 397

² Wale, op.cit., p 116. See also p 160

³ Sermons, p 642

⁴ Ibid, p 624

⁵ Collected Works, vol.II, p 202. Cf. Sermons, p 669

Despite his frequent references to the devil or Satan, Whitefield maintains throughout a strict Scriptural monism - the devil is always inferior to God, who "permits" him to work in testing men.¹ Satan is the originator of temptation. Whitefield held this to be true in his own life. Early in his Christian experience (at Oxford), he tells us that "whilst I was thus comforted on every side by daily conversing with so many Christian friends, God was pleased to permit Satan to sift me like wheat", and then follows Section 2 of the "Short Account", entitled "A Brief And Summary Account of my Temptations", in which again and again Satan is designated as the Tempter. From the devil he was for a while delivered: "After having undergone innumerable buffetings of Satan and many months' inexpressible trials by night and day under the spirit of bondage, God was at length pleased to remove the heavy load."² His belief in the Satanic power did not diminish with the years. On June 10, 1756, he wrote to Lady Huntingdon about a matter which had been agitating her:

"Satan wants to disturb your Ladyship's repose. Ere long, blessed be His glorious Emmanuel, he will be bruised under our feet. This last week I have had some respite from his artful and perplexing suggestions, and have been enabled to ride upon my high places."³

Often Satan is the being who "desires" men of God "to sift them like wheat" or "enslave" them.⁴ He has the "power of possessing a man". He was the subtle seducer of Eve in the Garden, of course, adopting the form of the serpent.⁵ In this guise/

¹ Sermons, pp 272, 488. Cf. Wale, op.cit., p 164

² Wale, op.cit., p 48, as amended by the footnote.

³ Collected Works, vol.III, p 184

⁴ Sermons, p 494, Wale, op.cit., pp 41, 42, 143, etc.

⁵ Sermons, pp 2 f. and 488

guise he is observed by Whitefield to be envious of man and desirous of his fall, shrewd as to attack, the master of flattery, breaking the power of God's words to man by distorting God Himself to man, and causing others to become his "factors" to ensnare "their nearest and dearest relatives."¹

Warfare between Christ and His people and "the devil and his children" dates from this Fall and is still in progress. It is Christ who is referred to in the last clause of Genesis 3:15, i.e. "the devil shalt bruise Jesus Christ's heel." The covenant in this verse is not between Adam and God (as was the first covenant before the Fall), but between the Father and the Son, "the second Adam": "God the Father and God the Son had entered into a covenant concerning the elect from all eternity, wherein God the Father promised that if the Son would offer His soul a sacrifice for sin, He should see His seed." Satan attacked Christ in accordance with this prophecy in Genesis 3:15, but the prophecy was fulfilled also in that Christ was triumphant in the final event:

"Satan bruised His heel when he tempted Him for forty days together in the wilderness ².....when he raised up strong persecutors against Him during the time of His public ministry... ..in an especial manner when our Lord complained that He was exceeding sorrowful even unto death and He sweat great drops of blood.....when he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Him.. ..most of all, when his emissaries nailed Him to an accursed tree, and our Lord cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?' Yet in all this, the blessed Jesus, the seed of the woman, bruised Satan's accursed head; for, in that He was tempted, He was able to succour those that are tempted. By His stripes we are healed. By dying He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." ³

From/

¹ Sermons, p 492

² See also Sermons, p 178 ff. Note the devil's use of Scripture and Whitefield's comments.

³ Ibid, p 11

From the earliest times up to the present day, says Whitefield, the strife rages, but the victory always remains with Christ.¹ In a believer's heart, "grace in the end shall get the better of nature.....The promise in the text ensures the perseverance and victory of believers over sin, Satan, death, hell."² At the Last Judgment, the final blow to the devil will be given: "Satan, the accuser of the brethren, and all his accursed seed, shall then be cast out and never suffered to disturb the seed of the woman any more."³

By his insistence throughout that God "permits" Satan to work, and by keeping that work restricted to temptation or testing, Whitefield made man and not God finally responsible for evil in human life, and at the same time preserved God's sovereign power over all, even the personification of evil, the devil.

1 Sermons, pp 187, 224; Wale, op.cit., p 419. Note Sermons, p 489 f. for the "Devices of Satan".
 2 Sermons, p 12
 3 Loc. cit.

CHAPTER FIVE

DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH, MINISTRY,
SACRAMENTS, AND PRAYER.

A. The Church:

Whitefield's relations with the Established Church in England were notoriously unhappy in the years following his first success as a preacher. When in April, 1739, he found the Church's pulpits were being closed to him, he said:

"I am and profess myself to be a member of the Church of England.....His Lordship of London allowed of my preaching there (Georgia) even when I had only received Deacon's orders; and I have never been charged by his Lordship with teaching or living otherwise than as a true minister of the Church of England. I keep close to her Articles and Homilies, which, if my₁ opposers did, we should not have so many dissenters from her."¹

To Whitefield, in these early years at any rate, the Church of England was "Christ's visible church upon earth". He was most perturbed when his friend, the Rev. Mr. Kinchin, who had been an Oxford Methodist and was Dean of Corpus Christi College there as well as possessor of a living, was about to resign both posts and leave the Church. He says:

"For I knew what dreadful consequences would attend a needless separation from the Established Church. For my own part, I can see no reason for my leaving the Church, however I am treated by the corrupt members and ministers of it. I judge of the state of a church, not from the practice of its members, but its primitive and public constitutions; and so long as I think the Articles of the Church of England are agreeable to Scripture, I am resolved to preach them up without bigotry or party zeal. For I love all who love the Lord Jesus."²

Circumstances/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 244. Cf. Gillies, op.cit., p 131 (footnote) and Collected Works, vol.II, p 38, where Whitefield opposes a motion of the Welsh association to separate from the Established Church (1743).

² Wale, op.cit. p 250 (21 April, 1739)

Circumstances, of course, forced him out of the actual church buildings of the Established Church, and gradually he came to adopt practices not in conformity with it. He became a "de facto" Dissenter, if not a professed one, for the rest of his life. He still considered that he adhered to the Church in matters of faith, although even here it is doubtful if he was strictly orthodox. His doctrine of the church as regards its order and practice was step by step changed during the first years of his ministry.¹ His opinion as to "externals" did not agree with the Established Church. To Kinchin he wrote also:

"As for objecting about the habits, robes, etc., good God! I thought we long since knew that the Kingdom of God did not consist in any externals, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."²

This placing of the "externals" into the background of religion, regarding some forms or other as necessary yet, as to their particular character in detail, as a matter of indifference, comes out clearly in his attitude to field-preaching, his attitude to all Protestant denominations, his attitude to the forms and methods of administering the Lord's Supper, and his attitude to the validity of ordination and to prayer, as will be seen later in this chapter.

The essence of the Church is the true witness it makes to the true faith, in his opinion. Whitefield puts the root cause of recruitment to Dissent (and he was a living proof of this in actual fact) to a lack of evangelical witness to the faith in the doctrine and practice of his own Church:

"It /

¹ See the very full account and defence of his conduct and preaching given in a letter to the Bishop of Bangor, Feb. 16, 1756. (Collected Works, vol. III, p 159 f

² Wale, op.cit., p 251; Sermons, p 727

"It is most notorious that for the iniquity of the priests the land mourns. We have preached and lived many sincere persons out of our communion. I have now conversed with several of the best of all denominations. Many of them solemnly protest that they went from the Church because they could not find food for their souls. They stayed among us till they were starved out." ¹

Whitefield says that it is because the Church of England has not been true, for instance, to its doctrine of the Holy Spirit and other equally important truths or facts that he and others have to act as they do. Addressing the generality of the clergy, he says:

"But you are the schismatics, you are the bane of the Church of England, who are always crying out, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord', and yet starve them out of our communion by feeding them only with the dry husks of dead morality."

He refers to the low sense of honour regarding subscription of the Articles:

"We subscribe to our Articles and make them serve for a key to get into Church preferment, and then preach contrary to these very Articles to which we have subscribed."

On this occasion, he proceeds to admit that all are not guilty of these wrongs:

"Far be it from me to charge all the clergy with this hateful hypocrisy. There are some left among us who dare to maintain the doctrines of the Reformation and preach the truth as it is in Jesus." ²

It is plain where he finds the exceptions to his general condemnation of the ministry of the Church of England!

A church to be true must reveal the Spirit of Christ to the world. The clergy of London and other cities and towns of England had closed their churches to Whitefield in 1739 (as they had a perfect legal right to do) and his answer was to publish a sermon that same year whose title is self-explanatory: "The Spirit/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 244

² Sermons, p 390

Spirit, Doctrines, and Lives of our Modern Clergy not Conform-
-able to the Spirit of Christ." The true church, he says else-
-where, though differing as to outward forms throughout the
centuries, yet remains the same as the early church with respect
to its essential doctrine:

"For though the church may differ as to the outward
state of it in different ages, yet as to the purity of its inward
state, it was, is, and always will be invariably the same."¹

Membership of the true church was marked for Whitefield,
not by membership of any particular branch of it, nor by mere
adherence to the ordinances and sacraments as dispensed by that
branch, but by dependence upon a deep, thorough-going repentance
and a sanctifying union with Christ as Lord. The contrast
between Whitefield and certain of his contemporaries appears
from the following, one instance from a sermon and the other
from his Journals:

"When we confine the spirit of God to this or that
particular church and are not willing to converse with any but
those of the same communion, this is to be righteous over-much
with a vengeance, and so it is to confine our communion within
church walls and to think that Jesus could not be in a field
as well as on consecrated ground. This is Judaism; this is
bigotry; this is like Peter who would not go to preach the
Gospel to the Gentiles, till he had a vision sent from God.
The Spirit of God is the centre of unity; and wherever I see
the image of my Master, I never inquire of them their opinions;
I ask them not what they are, so they love Jesus Christ in sin-
-cerity and truth; but embrace them as my brother, my sister, and
and my spouse. This is the spirit of Christianity. Many persons
who are bigots to this or that opinion, when one of a different
way of thinking has come where they are, have left the room or
place on that account. This is the spirit of the devil; and if
it were possible that these persons could be admitted into
Heaven with these tempers, that very place would be a very hell
to them. Christianity will never flourish till we are of one
heart and one mind. This may be esteemed as enthusiasm and
madness, and as a design to undermine the Established Church:
no, God is my judge, I should rejoice to see all the world
adhere to her Articles. I am a friend to her Homilies. I am a
friend/

¹ Sermons, p 297

friend to her Liturgy; and if they did not thrust me out of their churches, I would read them every day; but I do not confine the Spirit of God there; for, I say it again, I love all that love the Lord Jesus Christ." ¹

Nothing could indicate more clearly Whitefield's belief concerning the Church in which he had been trained and the relation of other communions to it. In his Journal of a later date than this sermon, he goes so far as to question the right to regard the institutions of the Church of England as being in any special sense Divinely-appointed:

"He (Dr. Cutler of Boston) then taking it for granted that the Church of England was the only true Apostolical church, drew a parallel between the Jewish and our Church, urging how God ordered everything to be made according to the pattern given in the Mount. I answered, 'that before the parallel could be just, it must be proved that everything enjoined in our Church was so much of a Divine institution as any rite or ceremony under the Jewish dispensation.' I added further, 'that I saw regenerate souls among the Baptists, among the Presbyterians, among the Independents, and among the Church folks - all children of God, and yet all born again in a different way of worship; and who can tell which is the most evangelical?'" ²

His approach to what constitutes the Church is seen in his attitude to the "new" departure of field-preaching, which called forth so much vituperation from his opponents. ³ In the sermon just quoted above, he had said that it is being "righteous over-much" "to confine our communion within church walls," etc. In Philadelphia in 1740, he says that "great numbers/

¹ Sermons, p 89

² Wale, op.cit., p 459. Cf. his comment on a preacher of the Church of England in Charleston, Ibid, p 443

³ See the Pamphlets against Whitefield's field-preaching e.g. in America, such as "A Letter to the President, Professors, etc. of Harvard College in Cambridge, in Answer to a Testimony etc. by the Rev. George Whitefield". Boston, 1745; and "Letter to the Rev. George Whitefield, An Itinerant Preacher, by Benjamin Prescott". Boston, 1745; and "An Apology in behalf of the Rev Mr. Whitefield, in Answer to a Late Pamphlet entitled 'A Letter to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield publicly calling upon him to vindicate his conduct or confess his faults, signed L---K---', Being Several Letters, by Thomas Foxcroft". 2nd edition, Boston, 1745.

numbers of the inhabitants would have built me immediately a very large church if I would have consented; but the Lord, I am persuaded, would have His Gospel preached in the fields, and building a church would, I fear, insensibly lead the people into bigotry, and make them place the church again, as they have done for a long time, in the church walls. For these reasons I declined it, though notwithstanding, I believe they will build some place."¹ (A church was built and later became the basis of an "academy", from which the University of Philadelphia still later took its rise).²

It was characteristic of Whitefield to prefix the following motto, taken from the works of St. Hilary, to one of the editions of his "Letter to the Religious Societies"(1739):³

"One thing I forewarn you of - beware of Antichrist; for it is evil to be taken, as you are, with the love of stone walls. It is evil to have a veneration for the Church of God, as you have, in houses and edifices.....To me, mountains and forests and fens and prisons and pits, are the safer places; for in these it was that the prophets - either waiting for or being overwhelmed by the Spirit of God - prophesied, or spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

His "catholic spirit" was evidenced early in his career.

"I bless God", he wrote in his "Short Account", "the partition wall of bigotry and sect religion was soon broken down in my heart, for as soon as the love of God was shed abroad in my soul, I loved all of whatsoever denomination who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity of heart." ⁴

When he said this he had already written to a Moravian, James Hutton:

"January 9, 1738.....I hope the favours I have received from you and others of your Christian brethren, will never go out of my mind, though you differ from me in some outward modds. I would willingly be of so catholic a spirit as to love the image of my Divine Master wherever I see it. I am far from thinking that God's grace is confined to any one set of men whatever. No. I know the partition wall is now broken down, and that Jesus Christ came to redeem people out of all nations and languages and tongues; and therefore His benefits are not to be confined to this or that particular set of professors." ⁵

This/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 421.

² Ibid, p 492, and Collected Works, vol.II, p 335 f.(Letter to Benjamin Franklin)

³ Collected Works, vol.IV, p 23 f.

⁴ Wale, op.cit., p 53

⁵ Collected Works, vol.I, p 33

This spirit was revealed in his dealings with others all his life, and was one of the distinctive contributions he made to the Evangelical Revival. On the voyage at the beginning of which he wrote that letter to Hutton, he met with the disunited "New Lights" and "Dark Lanthorns", societies which were at Gibraltar. Viewing them, he exclaims:

"O when will that time come when all differences about externals shall be taken away and we all with one heart and one mouth glorify our Lord Jesus Christ." "What a pity it is Christ's seamless coat should be rent in pieces on account of things in themselves indifferent." ¹ (He tried to unite these societies but failed).

He lodged and conversed with Quakers. He did the same with Baptists, Presbyterians, Independents, and Moravians. He dispensed the Sacraments to members of other communions, and gladly in his turn received their ministrations, saying in his letters and his Journals, "that a catholic spirit was best."² The Associate Presbytery of Scotland, who invited him there to preach, endeavoured to restrict his activities to the churches and the cause of the Secession, and to persuade him to embrace their "Solemn League and Covenant." But Whitefield would have none of this exclusive partisanship. He cautiously wrote to the Erskines before his first visit:

"I come only as an occasional preacher to preach the simple Gospel to all who are willing to hear me, of whatever denomination. It would be wrong in me to join in a reformation as to church government any further than I have light given me from above." ³

The further "light" the Presbytery was able to mediate was insufficient to win the subsequent approval of Whitefield to/

¹ Wale, op. cit., pp 124,130

² Ibid, p 459. Cf Belcher, op.cit., p 259 (Sacrament in the Congregational Church, Boston, 1744)

³ Collected Works, vol.I, p 262. Cf. p 268

to adhere to their party alone, and the party later turned on him bitterly.¹ Dr. Adam Gib expressed his disgust at Whitefield's broad attitude in no uncertain terms:

"As this foreigner comes here wihtout any Scripture mission or call, so his known and avowed principles are prelatical and thus contrary to the Word of God. His present ministrations have a direct tendency to introduce among us a latitudinarian scheme; and particularly to make men sceptics as to the discipline and government of the house of God. True indeed, this is promulgated under a very specious pretence - a pretence of universal charity for good men that differ about these things. And now matters are come to pass with many, that it is reckoned uncivil and uncharitable to make any ado about our Reformation standards of discipline and government, though founded on the Word of God." ²

In~cidentally it may be pointed out that this was a mild attack on Whitefield, so far as language is concerned, compared to many others made through the years.

Whitefield was grieved at the whole situation about Scotland and seems not to have placed the blame wholly on the Erskines. Whitefield's judgment summing up the matter is, for that age, very fair and enlightened:

"It surely must be wrong to fix such bounds to ourselves as forbid even our hearing those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity and have also been owned of Him. Christ would not have done so. Supposing the scheme of government which the Associate Presbytery contend for to be Scriptural, yet forbearance and longsuffering ought to be exercised towards such as differ from them. I am persuaded there is no such form of government prescribed in the book of God as excludes a toleration of all other forms whatsoever. If the New Testament outward Tabernacle was to be built as punctual as the Old, as punctual directions would have been given about the building of it; whereas it is only deduced by inference, and thus we see Independents, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians bring the same text to support their particular scheme; and I believe Jesus/

¹ Gillies, op.cit., p 75 ff.

² "A Warning against Countenancing the Ministrations of Mr. George Whitefield, published in the New Church at Bristow", etc., p 3 f. Dr. Gib later regretted this pamphlet, but was not alone in his attack on Whitefield at this time; e.g. see "An Act of the Associate Presbytery for Renewing the National Covenant of Scotland", Edinburgh, 1744, p 109.

Jesus Christ thereby would teach us to exercise forbearance to each other."

The underlining above is not Whitefield's but is done to show what may be considered his central emphasis in this matter of church polity as it is related to the Bible. Such conduct as the "Presbytery" advocate, he goes on to say, will lead to even further divisions and the setting up of more "particular churches". (He was a prophet here). He adds shrewdly: "Whether it be presbytery or episcopacy, if managed in the same manner, it will be productive of the same effects..I have not so learned Christ." ¹ However, it must not be inferred from all this that Whitefield desired to be careless of who belonged to the Church. He required a genuine experience of faith:

"I should enquire into people's experiences before I admitted them to the Lord's table. I should have church members meet in church fellowship and tell one another what God has done for their souls." ²

Apart from the relatively brief estrangement between him and Wesley, Whitefield revealed his "catholicity of spirit" in his relations with him and with Charles. Writing to a friend in New York (Mr. Noble, 1742), he says:

"Before yours came to hand, the Lord had given me an enlarged heart and unfeigned love and freedom to converse with all His dear children of whatever denomination. I talk freely with the Messrs. Wesley though we differ widely in a certain point. Most talk of a catholic spirit, but it is only until they have brought people into the pale of their own church. This is down-right sectarianism, not catholicism.....Why should we dispute when there is no probability of convincing?" ³

Writing/

¹ Collected Works, vol. I, p 314 (Letter to David Erskine); Gillies, op.cit., p 120 f.

² Collected Works, vol. I, p 317 (Letter to Ralph Erskine)

³ Ibid, p 372

Writing to Lady Huntingdon in 1749, he refers to the fact that "Mr. Wesley" and "Mr. Gibbons" are preaching for her, and says:

"Surely in this your Ladyship is directed from above. The blessed Jesus cares for His people of all denominations. He is gathering His elect out of all. Happy they who, with a disinterested view, take in the whole church militant, and, in spite of narrow-hearted bigots, breathe an undissembled catholic spirit to all." ¹

It is noted that from about 1756 onwards, he preached in all Wesley's chapels when on circuit², and also had the Wesleys preach in his Tabernacle and Tottenham Court Road Chapel in London.

In whatever church the believer might be, Whitefield holds that his allegiance to Christ is the chief criterion, both of his own faith and that of the church to which he belongs. When John Cennick, his faithful lay-preacher for many years and his friend, left him for the Moravians in 1747, Whitefield wrote to him:

"I would only caution you against taking anything for Gospel upon the mere authority of man. Go where thou wilt, though thou shouldest be in the purest society under Heaven, thou wilt find that the best of men are but men at best, and wilt meet with stumbling-blocks enough to teach thee of the necessity of a continual dependence on the Lord Jesus, who alone is infallible, and who will not give that glory to another." ³

Apparently after Whitefield left Scotland in 1741, he was charged with denying the true Head of the Church, for he wrote to his friend Willison of Dundee:

"August 17, 1742.....As to what they say about the supremacy, my statements agree with what is said in the Westminster/

¹ Collected Works, vol. II, p 226

² E.g. see C. Wesley's Journal, vol. II, pp 134, 178

³ Collected Works, vol. II, p 114. See also vol. II, p 265 - Letter to James Hervey: "If we think.....to see a perfect saint or a perfect church till we are come to Heaven, we shall find ourselves much mistaken....." (June 14, 1749)

'Westminster Confession of Faith'(Chapter xxiii). I do own the Lord Jesus to be the blessed Head and King of His Church." ¹

In a sermon preached at the end of his life, he refers to the fact that the Church is alluded to (in a text) in the singular number and not in the plural. He explains:

"How is it that God.....speaks of the Church as though it consisted only of one individual person?.....Though the Church is composed of many members, they have but one Head, and they are united by the bond of one Spirit, by whom they have the same vital union of the soul with God; and therefore it teaches Christians not to say to one another, 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, or Cephas', but to behave and live so that the world may know that we all belong to one common Christ." ²

Thus Whitefield continued to demonstrate this moderate doctrine of the Church throughout all his days. In another sermon in his last years, he says that moderation is his policy and always has been. He continues:

"I do not care whether you go to Church or to meeting. I am, I profess, a member of the Church of England, and if they will not let me preach in the Church I will preach anywhere. All the world is my parish, and I will preach wherever God gives me opportunity; but you will never find me disputing about the outward appendages of religion: do not tell me you are a Baptist"...etc.; "Tell me you are a Christian, that is all I want. This is the religion of Heaven and must be ours upon earth." ³

All the foregoing is to be accepted as applying to the Protestant Church in all its sects. Whitefield, in common with all the other Protestant preachers and theologians of post-Reformation times, saw only those things in the Roman Catholic Church which had led to the Reformers' breach with Rome: the worship of the Virgin Mary, of her image and the images of other saints, the ritual of the Mass and the great festivals/

¹ Gillies, op.cit., p 119. See also "An Apology for Members of the Church of Scotland who are Hearers of the Rev. George Whitefield", Edinburgh, 1742, p 28 f.

² Sermons, p 707

³ Ibid, p 684

festivals, etc. It is here that he remarks fully upon the "externals" to which the Roman Church was bound, and extols the freedom in worship of his own country's churches. When in Gibraltar on his way out to Georgia (1738), he writes in his Journal:

"After morning exposition in the (Protestant) Church, went and saw the Roman Catholics at their High Mass; and shall only make this remark: that there needs no other argument against P~~o~~ery than to see the pageantry, superstition, and idolatry of their worship."¹

So far as doctrine is concerned he had, of course, been trained in the anti-Romanist position of the Thirty Nine Articles (numbers vi, xi, xiv, xix, xx, xxi, xxii, xxx, etc.) He observed the "ecclesiastical curiosities of the country" of Portugal when at Lisbon in 1754 - "strange and incredible things, not more strange than instructive."

"Never did civil and religious liberty appear to me in so amiable light as now.....O happy England! and happy Metho-
-dists that are Methodists indeed! And all I account such, who being dead to sects and parties, aim at nothing else but a holy method of living to and dying in the blessed Jesus."

"It is impossible to be sufficiently thankful for civil and religious liberty, for simplicity of worship, and powerful preaching of the Word of God."

"Alas! to what lengths will superstition run! And how expensive is the pageantry of a false religion!"

"I returned to my lodgings" (after a time of processions and elaborate services) "not a little affected to see so many thousands led away from the simplicity of the Gospel by such a mixture of human artifice and blind superstition."

"Let us comfort ourselves with this thought, that there is a season approaching when the Lord God of Elijah will Himself come and destroy this and every other species of Antichrist by the breath of His mouth....."

"O what a mighty spirit and power from on high must Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Zwinglius, and those glorious Reformers be necessarily endued with, who dared first openly to oppose and stem such a torrent of superstition and spiritual tyranny."

"O for Protestant practices to be added to Protestant principles!"

"I am well aware that the Romanists deny the charge of idolatry/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 128. See also p 120

idolatry, but after having seen what I have seen this day..... I cannot help thinking that a person must be capable of making more than metaphysical distinctions, and deal in very abstract ideas indeed, fairly to evade the charge." ¹

Such are extracts from Whitefield's letters of the time giving his reactions to the many colourful scenes and celebrations which were the outward expression of the Roman Church's doctrine. They show forth his attitude to the doctrine and practice of that Church. His judgment would have been echoed by any of his co-religionists who had seen the same. Whitefield preached to men assuming that they all agreed with him that the Roman Catholics were outside the true Church altogether and that none of his hearers would tolerate even the slightest hint of a tendency to lean towards the doctrine or the practice of the Papacy. If he wanted to condemn any point of faith or practice, he took it for granted that if he labelled it "Romish", or "the back-door to Popery", his listeners or readers would recoil and thrust it from them. He and they were people of the "Book"; and the "erroneous principles" of the Roman Church were due, in his estimation, to their lack of the Bible in the vernacular, and their consequent ignorance of Biblical truth. In this way, they were led astray - to finish outside the true faith. ²

.....

1 Collected Works, vol.III, p 67 ff.

2 Wale, op.cit., p 176 (Whitefield in Ireland)

B. The Ministry:

Whitefield believed in the necessity for a well-trained ministry whose members were adjudged by the Church to be fit to preach the Word of God and administer the Sacraments. One of his most strongly professed defences against the opposers of his itinerancy, field-preaching, and preaching in the licensed chapels of Dissenters and others, was his own licence to preach, originally given by the Bishop of Gloucester, Dr. Benson. This was only his authority to be appointed as a priest and was not a licence to preach anywhere and everywhere. Bishop Benson had said at the time of his ordination that he did not need a general authority to preach in any diocese whatsoever, and at first the Bishop of London (Edmund Gibson) also permitted him to preach in any church in London and elsewhere without a special licence. Whitefield set great store by the consent of the Church and, when he came to a particular town or village, always first asked permission to preach in the Church of England building before looking for another place. It was only where and when he was refused entrance to the pulpits of the Established Church that he was forced (reluctantly) to take to the fields or the chapels and meeting-houses of Dissent. That he regarded a true ministry appointed by Christ as an essential means of bringing salvation to men is clear from his attributing the wastage of Church of England members from that communion to the ranks of Dissent, to the lack of personal spiritual life and pastoral care for the souls of men revealed in the lives of the majority of his fellow-priests. This we have seen already. His fellow-clergy/

-clergy he attacked again and again, some think unnecessarily and imprudently. However, there is no doubt about his own serious and solemn and withal sincere attitude to the office of priesthood, shown by his references to his own call and preparation for orders:

"The saying of the Apostle, 'Not a novice lest, being puffed up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil', and that first question of our excellent Ordination Office, 'Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and administration', used even to make me tremble whenever I thought of entering into the ministry. With strong crying and tears I have often said, 'Lord, I am a youth of uncircumcised lips; Lord, send me not into Thy vineyard yet.'"

From this inwardly doubting state, Whitefield moved towards his early ordination.¹ Nearly twenty years later he wrote to a wealthy pluralist, the Rev. Zachary Pearce, D.D., Bishop of Bangor etc., etc., (who had opposed him violently in the press and tried in this and other less orderly ways to prevent him from preaching in a licensed chapel in London):

"God can witness that I entered into Holy Orders according to the form of ordination of the Church of England, with a disinterested view to promote His glory and the welfare of precious and immortal souls. For near twenty years, as thousands can testify, I have conscientiously defended her Homilies," etc.²

From time to time Whitefield laid down several desiderata for the office of minister. The first requirement of the minister is to examine himself as to the genuineness or otherwise of his call. Even before this and far more important, is the need for his being convinced that he himself has had a genuine experience of conversion. He was constantly accused/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 56 f. See Chapter One, p 10 supra

² Collected Works, vol.III, p 159. See also p 165 ff. of same volume for other letters revealing Whitefield's justification for his ministry and the customary answers he gave to accusations of irregularity.

accused of disparaging the existing clergy and thus damaging the cause of Christ before the masses. Mention has already been made of the redoubtable attack of the learned Dr. Charles Chauncey of Boston, in 1743. Among the leading "dangerous errors" of which he accused the people (led astray by Whitefield and others of his ilk) are these:

"1. That which supposes ministers, if not converted, incapable of being the instruments of spiritual good to men's souls.

2. A presumptuous dependence on the blessed Spirit, appearing in the following particulars: so depending on the Spirit as to despise learning; also, so as to oppose a diligent use of appointed means and so as to reflect dishonour upon the written revelations of God."¹

It was true that many had come after Whitefield's first visits to America and had behaved in an extravagant fashion, but Whitefield could not be accused of these "errors". It was perfectly true that he and the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, one of his most active helpers, had said some very hard things about the ministry, but Whitefield believed they were justified. Others had gone to the extreme in more or less trying to imitate him. Whatever critics said about his conduct, he never ceased to proclaim the need for evangelical ministers. Such an entry in his Journal as the following is typical:

"When I got into the pulpit, I saw a great number of ministers sitting around and about me. Coming to these words, 'Art thou a master in Israel and knowest thou not these things?' the Lord enabled me to open my mouth boldly against unconverted ministers; for I am persuaded the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ. The reasons why congregations have been so dead is because they have had dead men preaching to them.....How can dead men beget living children? It is true indeed that God may convert people by the devil if He chooses, and so He may by unconverted ministers; but I believe that He seldom makes use of either of them for this purpose./

¹ Chauncey, op.cit., p 242 f

purpose. No, He chooses vessels made meet by the operations of His blessed Spirit." ¹

Chauncey makes use of this very passage in his work cited above; and of course he is right, from the point of view of Presbyterian doctrine at least, in insisting that the efficacy of the ministration of the Word and the Sacraments is not absolutely tied up with the personal faith and character of the minister, but Whitefield is surely correct also in insisting on the attainment of the ideal - a ministry of converted men. Whitefield would support his contention with such as this:

"Saul did not preach Christ before he knew Him; no more should anyone else. An unconverted minister, though he could speak with the tongues of men and angels will be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal to those whose senses are exercised to discern spiritual things. Ministers that are unconverted may talk and declaim of Christ and prove from books that He is the Son of God, but they cannot preach with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power unless they preach from experience and have a proof of His Divinity by a work of grace wrought upon their own souls." ²

There is the accent of commonsense and reality in all that, and it was a note that was demanded by the conditions of the times, according to the best historians since and the contemporary records.

Or again, the ministers went too frequently to places of common amusement, said the preacher; and consequently,

"they neglect the work of their calling. Their sermons are but a week's study (?) to please the ears of the people or to advance their own reputation.....They do not preach the doctrines of the Reformation. No, Sennecca, Cicero, Plato, or any of the heathen philosophers would preach as good doctrine as we hear in most of our churches. Our ministers subscribe to their Articles and think no more about them. They use/

¹ ~~Wale~~, op.cit., p 471

² Sermons, p 432

use them as a key to get preferment, and when they have got it, they put the key in their pockets." "Let them examine their own lives before they condemn others for enthusiasts."

Whitefield could easily instance many things he held as disqualifications for a valid ministry:

"They (the clergy) make no scruple of frequenting taverns and public houses. They make no conscience of playing several hours at billiards, bowls and other unlawful games, which they esteem as innocent diversions. Plurality of livings and not the salvation of your souls is the aim, the chief aim, of many, very many of our present clergy. They have quite forsaken the good old way, and brought up a new one which their fathers knew not. They don't catechise. They don't visit from house to house. They don't watch over their flocks by examining their lives. They keep up no constant religious conversation in families under their care..... We may justly cry to my letter-learned brethren, 'Physicians, heal yourselves'!"

"Don't flatter yourselves", he said, apostrophising the clergy, "that a long gown and great preferment authorise you to speak, write or preach against the doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ" (i.e. the "new birth" and other special emphases of Whitefield himself). "At the great day we shall all be upon a level. No distinction there! If they had preached Christ in sincerity and truth, I would not have opened my mouth against them, but when they exclaim, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!' and are building up the temple of the devil, if I were not to preach, the very stones would cry out!" ¹

These long extracts are from 1739 sermons and it is no wonder that he received abuse in pamphlets and other ways, when he used such strong terms of denunciation, and was only a young man of twenty five years at the time. It must be conceded also that Whitefield was going against the 26th. Article of his own Church, which safeguards the validity of the preaching of the Word and the dispensing of the Sacraments, even though the minister be unworthy. Opponents were quick to charge him with subscribing to the Articles of the Church at his ordinations and then forgetting them when it suited him - the very charge he himself preferred against the clergy generally/

¹ Quoted Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 300 (not in Collected Works, etc.)

generally.

In addition to the experimental knowledge of God in Christ thus held as necessary, Whitefield recognised as the years passed that the natural human gifts of the minister were also important. As a "father in the Lord" to several young aspirants for the ministry, he gave advice from time to time as to the necessary qualifications. He recognised that men in the ministry have differing gifts. In a letter addressed to the evangelists of the Welsh Methodist Church at one of their Assemblies (1741), Whitefield wrote:

"One great matter is rightly to know to what particular office and to what particular part Jesus Christ has called each of you. Different persons have different gifts and graces. Some are called to awaken, others to establish and build up. Some have popular gifts for large auditories; others move best in a more contracted sphere, and may be exceedingly useful in the private Societies", and so on.¹

Later, in 1766, he wrote to John Fawcett (subsequently for fifty years a minister in Yorkshire):

"If truly called to the glorious work of the ministry, I wish you much prosperity in the Lord.....A clear head, and an honest, upright, disinterested, warm heart, with a good elocution, and a moderate degree of learning will carry you through all and enable you to do wonders. " 2

He would never have said anything so matter-of-fact to a young ordinand thirty years before. But he would probably have still held in 1766 the view of the "world" he advocates for another ordinand in 1748:

"Study books and men but above all study your own heart and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Get your heart free from worldly hopes and fears and you will avoid/

¹ Quoted Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 541

² Ibid, vol. II, p 497. Cf. Sermons, p 713

avoid thousands of those snares into which young ministers, for want of this, too often fall. " 1

It can therefore be seen that Whitefield, though he may, in his eagerness to serve the cause of Christ, have exaggerated the low spiritual state of the clergy of his time, had a high doctrine of their function and qualifications, and so was justified in looking askance at their standards. He had such a sense of consecration in himself, that he was sincerely distressed to see a lack of it in his brethren.

He makes constant references to ministers being better for suffering of different kinds. Persecution, for instance, is often a means of grace. In his Preface to the edition of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", he refers to its being written while the author was in Bedford gaol, and remarks: "Ministers never write or preach so well as when under the Cross. The Spirit of Christ and of glory then rests upon them."² He was also fond of quoting Luther: "Luther says he never undertook fresh work but that he was either visited with a fit of sickness or some strong temptation. Prayer, meditation, and temptation are necessary accomplishments, in his account, for any minister. May I follow him as he did Christ!"³

Enough has been said to make it clear that Whitefield recognised the ordinations of other denominations as well as those of his own Church of England.⁴ His requirements in this respect/

1 Collected Works, vol.II, p 217. Whitefield would have subscribed wholeheartedly to the view of his opponents as quoted in a pamphlet, "A Letter from a Gentleman in New England Anent Whitefield's Preaching", etc., p 20 f.

2 Collected Works, vol.IV, p 306

3 Wale, op.cit., p 330

4 Ibid, p 458 f. Collected Works, vol.I, pp 307 f., 314

respect were much as Wesley's: did the man love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, and did his life conform to that experience of faith? So long as a man gave evidence of these, then Whitefield's catholic spirit put no barriers in the way of recognising and sharing in his ministry. Early in his career he voted against lay-preaching (May 16, 1739), but of course, later on, he employed several lay-preachers in the Tabernacle and Tottenham Court Road Chapel.¹

.....

C. The Sacraments:

Whitefield's doctrine about the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper will be referred to only briefly, as he accepted the sacraments largely as he received them from the Church of England, and he administered them in accordance with the orders of service in the Anglican Prayer Book, with the exception of a few rubrics. His allusions to them directly are very meagre.

Whitefield would baptize any person so long as that person, if an adult, was aware of what was involved. The rite then entitled the recipient to other privileges of Church membership.² He would also baptize infants. In this it is to be noted that he preferred simplicity in all respects. Deploring the rich apparel in which some infants were once brought before him for baptism, he said:

"The little infants who were brought to baptism were wrapped/

¹ C. Wesley's Journal, vol. I, p 149

² Wale, op.cit., p 136 f

wrapped up in such fine things and so much pains taken to dress them that one would think that they were brought thither to be initiated into, rather than to renounce, the pomps and vanities of this world." ¹

The Church of England doctrine embodied in the service in the Prayer Book for "The Ministration of Public Baptism", expressly states that after the child is baptised it is "regenerate". Whitefield with his insistence on the necessity for the "new Birth", being born again not only of water but the Spirit, questioned this. ² A little before his death, he said:

"I remember when I began to speak against baptismal regeneration - in my first sermon printed when I was about twenty two years old or a little more - the first quarrel many had with me was because I did not say that all people who were baptised were born again. I would as soon believe the doctrine of transubstantiation. Can I believe that a person who, from the time of his baptism to the time, perhaps, of his death, never fights against the world, the flesh and the devil, and never minds one word of what his godfathers and godmothers promised for him, is a real Christian? No, I can as soon believe that a little wafer in the hands of a priest is the very blood and bones of Jesus Christ." "I do believe baptism to be an ordinance of Christ, but at the same time, no candid person can be angry for my asserting that there are numbers that have been baptised when grown up or when very young that are not regenerated by God's Spirit." ³

A conversation he had in 1740 on this subject and a sermon preached on it from the opposite point of view by a Church opponent in 1738 have been referred to in Chapter Three supra, p 77.

If/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 475

² Ibid, p 459. The rubric in the Prayer Book on Baptismal Regeneration is Arminian - A.W. Harrison, "Arminianism," p 88

³ Sermons, p 699. Cf. also "The Putting on the New Man a Certain Mark of the Real Christian, A Sermon preached at the Tabernacle on the 5th. Jan. 1750," p 11: "I am afraid a great many people say it (regeneration) is wrought into the soul by baptism, and that they were Christians when infants of a span long: and they would flatter themselves their names were written in Heaven from the time their names were written in the Parish books. But I would as soon believe the doctrine of Transubstantiation as that of baptismal regeneration."

If grace did not come to the infant "ex opere operato" what was Whitefield's doctrine? In a late sermon he sets forth what was probably his own position almost all his life:

"I cannot make sport for the devil by railing against infant or adult baptism: it is a strange thing how bigots can set the world on fire by throwing water at one another, and that people cannot be baptised, or sprinkled as others call it, without bespattering one another, and showing that the chief thing they have been baptised into are the waters of strife. This is catching at shadows and making sport for the devil, while the combatants on both sides, being thus engaged in throwing the shadowy water at one another, lose the substantials of religion while they are defending the outside of it.¹ For my part I do not enter into the debate about infant or adult baptism. There has been a dispute about the mode as well as about the subjects of baptism; persons equally skilled in language pretend to bring various texts from the original to prove that the word 'baptizo' signifies sprinkling or plunging, and I believe you and I might as well attempt to draw two parallel lines and bring them to meet at a certain place, as to bring these learned combatants together; for of all disputants, religious disputants are the most fiery and obstinate. Therefore, I am for those that have learned to throw water on the bigotted fire, 'to think and let think' about the mode, and consider what it imports."

In this consideration of "Spiritual Baptism", based on the text Romans 6:3,4, he goes on to say that the chief thing baptism signifies is to be baptised "in heathen and out Christian". He speaks as if the rite matters not at all, as if the sacrament was entirely inefficacious. Better than being baptised, he says, is to ask each other "when we come together", "whether, when we received the outward sign by sprinkling or dipping, we really received the thing signified in our hearts and exemplify the thing signified in our lives." "Now pray, what is the thing signified?" he asks next. The answer is in his text: "that the believer has been baptised into the 'name' or the 'nature' of Christ; that is, we have

not/
¹ Cf. Collected Works, vol.IV, p 307 (Preface to edition of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress", 1767)

not only put on Christ in an outward profession but have been so baptised by the Holy Ghost as to be made members of Christ's mystical body, united to Him by the blessed Spirit." Thus he interprets Romans chapter 6 in a mystical sense as referring to adult, responsible believers only, and not to infants. What therefore he has to say is in effect that faith must be personal in the recipient of baptism and that this faith, conscious of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul, is the only true baptism. He shows this by the manner in which he proceeds in this sermon. To be baptised into Christ is to be baptised, first of all, into His death. What is this?

"I cannot fully tell you, I do not know myself, and we should preach according to our experience.....Though I have been in Christ four or five and thirty years and know but little of Christ, yet I think I can tell you a little..... We are to die daily, we are to be conformed to Christ's death.....When we talk of dying the death of Christ, we mean being crucified to the world with Him."

The "old man" must be mortally wounded and die off. Secondly, baptism signifies being raised to newness of life, "as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father."

"This points out to us in what sense Jesus Christ was the resurrection and the life and shows us that everything Jesus Christ did and suffered must be spiritually experienced in our hearts."

And then, as might have been expected, he goes on to develop his favourite theme, the "new birth".¹

To sum up: Whitefield had a mystical doctrine of Baptism as St. Paul has in Romans 6, rather than one that placed the chief emphasis on the purification by washing, of which/

¹ For this sermon, see Sermons, p 678 ff.

which water was the sign. Also he did not confine the efficacy of God's grace in the sacrament to the moment of administration (this moment of administration was a matter "indifferent") but insisted that the subsequent life of the subject, infant or adult, should be closely regarded, to disclose whether or not the baptism had been a true one. Nevertheless, there is no suggestion anywhere ~~that~~ anyone should be re-baptised outwardly upon conversion.

The Lord's Supper was a sacramental means of grace and not a "bare memorial" to Whitefield. Early in his ministry, he says:

"On receiving the Holy Sacrament, especially before trials, I have found grace in a very affecting manner and in abundant measure sometimes imparted to my soul - an irrefragable proof to me of the miserable delusion of the author of that work, 'The Plain Account of the Sacrament', which sinks that Holy Sacrament to a bare memorial." ¹

That the Sacrament is a sign and seal of faith, of inward and invisible grace, is shown by many references to "sealing" by means of it: "sealing" of the baptismal vow ², and of the confession of faith and vows made upon ordination.³ Nevertheless, he himself regards it as partly a "memorial", a remembrance of Christ's death. In 1740, he says in his Journal:

"I have ministered the Sacrament in a private house. Never did I see anything more solemn. The room was large and most were in tears as though they were weeping at their Saviour's Cross. Surely Christ crucified was set before them." ⁴

Speaking about the significance of the rite near the same /

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 46

² E.g., ibid, p 188

³ E.g., ibid, p 60

⁴ Ibid, p 450

same date, he said:

"As many of you as design to partake of the emblems of the body and blood of our dying Lord, examine well yourselves lest by eating and drinking unworthily, you eat and drink damnation to yourselves: remember the dying love of your dying Lord and eat and drink in commemoration thereof: do not let the world keep you from partaking thereof: and when you have eaten and drunk, do not go and run away into the world. Let the world see that you have been with Jesus."¹

Christ was thus present in the Sacrament. In 1755, he published a little book entitled "A Communion Mornings Companion" (12mo. 140pp., London). In it he included some meditations on the five last questions and answers of the Catechism of the Church of England, extracted from a work of Bishop Ken. In the Preface, he says:

"Imagining that the words 'real presence', though evidently meant by the good Bishop only of the Redeemer's spiritual presence (which is all the presence I know of) might stumble some, I erased them and also made a few alterations in some other passages which, by some, might be judged objectionable."

In this also he made reference to his belief that there was no one set form of administration, and to his practice of communicating with the members and ministers of other denominations.² The occasion referred to in his Journals quoted above (where he administered the Sacrament in "a private house") illustrates his ecumenical spirit regarding the Lord's Supper. He says:

"What was best, Baptists, Church folks and Presbyterians all joined together and received according to the Church of England except two, who desired to have it sitting. I willingly complied, knowing it was a thing quite indifferent."³

This freedom in "externals" was again typified by his own/

1 Sermons, p 559

2 Tyerman, op.cit., vol.II, p 344 f.

3 Wale, op.cit., p 450

own readiness to receive the Sacrament from the ministers of other communions than his own.¹ Whitefield seems to have progressively narrowed down the beliefs essential in his opinion for membership of the Church, and many a time he must have dispensed the elements to those who did not hold his views completely. This was different from his early days, when he refused the cup to a member who did not agree with his expressed doctrine of the "eternity of hell torments", which he preached shortly before the occasion in question.²

All along, of course, he clearly saw the tendency of the Quakers, when they dispensed with all sacraments. Conferring with them about such matters, he comments shrewdly:

"We could by no means agree about the disuse of the two outward signs in the Sacrament.....Much sincerity and simplicity seems to be amongst them, but I think at the same time, they insist so much upon the inward life that they place too much religion in their not using externals." ³

Some reference must be made here to the "love-feasts" common in the Moravian Societies, which the Methodists took over from them. The Methodists joined the Moravians in these meetings in their early days. They can be described in Whitefield's own words:

"December 10.....In the evening I went to Fetter Lane Society where we had what may not improperly be called a 'love-feast' - eating a little bread and water, and spending about two hours in singing.....December 24.....Then I went to another 'love-feast' at Fetter Lane, and it being Christmas Eve, continued till near four in the morning in prayer, psalms, and thanksgiving, with many truly Christian brethren, and my heart was much enlarged and full of love." ⁴

The Wesleys shared in these seasons of intense fellowship. They/

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 459

² Ibid, p 151 f. See also Sermons, p 268 f

³ Wale, op.cit., p 231

⁴ Ibid, p 187

They were an attempt to revive the primitive practice of the early Church as described in Acts 2:42 and 46b - "And they continued steadfastly in.....fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." "And they,.....breaking their bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Later on, of course, both the Wesleys, Whitefield, and most of the rest of the Methodists broke with the Moravians over certain extravagances of the latter, and there is no evidence that Whitefield and his followers continued to hold "love-feasts" as distinct from services of Holy Communion.

.....

D. Prayer:

Prayer is an important part of the Christian life, says Whitefield:

"Now prayer is a duty formed on natural religion. The very heathens never neglected it, though many Christian heathens amongst us do; and it is so essential to Christianity, that you might as reasonably expect to find a living man without breath as a true Christian without the spirit of prayer and supplication. Thus no sooner was St. Paul converted, but behold, 'he prayeth', saith the Lord Almighty. And thus it will be with any child of God as soon as he becomes such: prayer being truly called the natural cry of the new-born soul. For in the heart of every true believer, there is a Heavenly tendency, a Divine attraction, which as sensibly draws him to converse with God, as the loadstone attracts the needle. A deep sense of their own weakness and of Christ's fulness, a strong conviction of their natural corruption and of the necessity of renewing grace, will not let them rest from crying night and day to their Almighty Redeemer, that the Divine image which they lost in Adam may, through His all-powerful mediation and the sanctifying operations of His blessed Spirit, be begun, carried on, and fully perfected, both in their souls and bodies."¹

The important points to be noted in this statement are that prayer is an essential Christian duty based not only on the natural/

¹ Sermons, p 538. Also pp 428, 507

natural order of things, but also on the fact that, due to the very character of the change in regeneration and in face of his awareness of sinfulness and the need of grace, the Christian inevitably and willingly turns to God in prayer.

Prayer, accompanying the "spirit of grace", is a mark of the reception of the Holy Ghost. Christ in His life on earth is our example of this, for,

"whosoever is made partaker of the same Spirit with the holy Jesus, will be of the same mind, and delight in nothing so much as to 'draw nigh unto God', and lift up holy hands and hearts in frequent and devout prayer."¹

He points out that the Jewish Temple was a house of prayer and therefore

"on this account also, true believers may be styled 'the temples of the living God'. For being wholly devoted and dedicated to God, even a God in Christ, their hearts become seats of prayer, from whence as so many living altars, a perpetual sacrifice of prayer and praise (like unto, but superior to the perpetual oblation under the Mosaic dispensation) is continually ascending and offered up to the Father of mercies, the God of all consolations. Such, and such only, who thus worship God in the temple of their hearts can be said to be made priests or to be styled a royal priesthood. Such and such only can truly be styled the temples of the living God, because only such pray to Him, as one expresses it, in the temple of their hearts, and consequently worship Him in spirit and in truth. Let no one say that such devotion is impracticable, or at least only practicable by a few and those such who have nothing to do with the common affairs of life, for this is the common duty and privilege of all Christians."

"The love of God is all in all. When once possessed of this, meditation, prayer, praise and other spiritual exercises become habitual and delightful."²

These passages sum up the well-founded and practical thoughts of Whitefield concerning the nature and place of prayer. To him it was not remotely and mystically a part of the belief and practice of the preacher, but was something vitally related to the being and experience of "Everyman".

This can be said also about his attitude to the methods

and/

1. Sermons, p 437 f

2 Ibid, p 506 f

and forms of prayer, about which there was so much controversy.¹ Whitefield's own views were no doubt moulded by the circumstances of his own ministry, but he could justify his practices on other grounds than these. In his opinion, prayer may be one of three types: according to prescribed forms, extemporare, or silent. An example of the attitude he had to contend with in those days is the following:

"Our Lord", (he says in a sermon on Luke 18:14 and in comment on verse 11 in particular), "Our Lord first takes notice of his posture: 'the Pharisee stood'. He is not to be condemned for that, for standing as well as kneeling is a proper posture for prayer: 'when you stand praying', says our Lord, though sometimes our Lord kneeled, nay, lay flat on His face upon the ground. His apostles also kneeled, as we read in the Acts, which has made me wonder at some who are so bigotted as to standing in family as well as in public prayer, that they will not kneel, notwithstanding that all kneel that are around them. I fear there is something of the Pharisee in this conduct. Kneeling or standing are indifferent if the knee of the soul be bent and the heart upright towards God. We should not study to be particular in indifferent things, lest we offend weak minds."²

It is somewhat amazing what opposition was aroused by Whitefield's use of extemporare prayer. As late as 1768, a "gentleman" who called himself "a late member of the University of Oxford", said in a pamphlet addressed to Whitefield:

"Your sermons are off-hand harangues - mere enthusiastic rant - a wild rhapsody of nonsense - the foam of an over-heated imagination - like old-wives' fables or profane babblings, proceeding from a spirit of pride and ignorance. But however absurd and ridiculpus your sermons - the spuings of the heart upon the people in unconcocted sentences - they are tolerable in comparison of your extemporare prayers to the Deity!!" ³

In/

¹ See for example these two pamphlets revealing opposition to Whitefield's use of extemporare prayer: "An Apology in behalf of the Rev Mr. Whitefield, in Answer to a late Pamphlet entitled 'A Letter to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield publicly calling upon him to vindicate his conduct or confess his faults, signed L-----K-----', Being Several Letters, by Thomas Foxcroft", 1745; and "A Letter to the Rev Thomas Foxcroft, Being an Examination of His Apology for the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, By A.C---d, A.M. and J.J.C." - Boston, 1745.

² Sermons, p 350

³ "Remarks upon the Rev Mr Whitefield's Letter to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. By a late Member of the University. Oxford, 1768".

In Whitefield's letter to which this was supposed to be an answer, Whitefield had argued that though "the English Liturgy is one of the most excellent forms of public prayer in the world", yet no form can "possibly suit every particular case." In addition, he said:

"What great sinners they must have been who prayed in an extemporare way before any forms of prayer existed! The prayers we read of in Scripture - the prayers which opened and shut Heaven, the effectual, fervent, energetic prayers of those righteous and holy men of old which availed so much with God - were all of an extemporare nature. And I ^{am} apt to believe that, if not only our students and ministers, but private Christians, were born from above and taught of God as those wrestlers with God were, they would want forms no more than they did." ¹

Nearly thirty years before he had remarked in his Journal: "When the spirit of prayer began to be lost, then forms of prayer were invented."² His advocacy of extemporare prayer, however, did not lead him to think that it was something to rely solely upon as if it were an essential article of belief.

"There are many Pharisees", he said, "that pray (and preach too) extemporare. I do not see why these (gifts) may not be acquired as well as other arts and sciences. A man with a good elocution, ready turn of thought, and a good memory, may repeat his own or other men's sermons, and by the help of a Wilkins or a Henry, may pray excellently well, and yet not have the least grain of grace in his heart.....Not every one that prays extemporare is a spiritual, nor every one that prays with a form, a formal man. Let us not judge one another." ³

In his answer to the "Querists", he says: "I am of Bishop Sanderson's mind - "Study without prayer is atheism, prayer without study, presumption'". ⁴

Then also there is silent prayer. Speaking on "The Resurrection of Lazarus" (John 11:43,44), he says:

"There/

¹ Collected Works, vol.IV, p 316 f. See also p 311 f.

² Wale, op.cit., p 485

³ Sermons, p 350 f. See also Wale, op.cit., p 485

⁴ Collected Works, vol.IV, p 48

"There is a way of praying, even when we do not and cannot speak. 'Why criest thou?' said God to Moses, though we do not hear that he spake one word, but he cried in his heart. And I observe this for the comfort of some weak but real Christians who think they never pray unless they can have a great flow of words; but this is a great mistake: for we often pray best when we speak least. There are times when the heart is too big to speak.....And perhaps the soul is never in a better frame than when, in a holy stillness and unspeakable serenity, it can put itself as a blank in Jesus' hand for Him to stamp on it just what He pleases." ¹

The content of prayer varies, of course. Whitefield in his preaching and writing classifies prayers in the traditional fashion. They may be petitionary², confessional³, of thanksgiving⁴, and intercessory⁵, especially for friends and people far distant.

The following is a good specimen of his preaching on prayer and will serve as a fitting conclusion to this chapter on the means of grace:

"O prayer, prayer! it brings and keeps God and man together; it raises man up to God and brings God down to man. If you would keep your walk with God, pray, pray without ceasing. Be much in secret, set prayer. When you are about the business of life, be much in ejaculatory prayer. Send, from time to time, short letters post to Heaven upon the wings of faith. They will reach the very heart of God, and will return to you loaded with blessings." ⁶

¹ Sermons, p 408. Cf. Collected Works, vol.I, p 407

² Wale, op.cit., pp 52,53,338 etc., Sermons, pp 161,238,350 f.

³ Sermons, pp 161,162, 353 f.

⁴ Ibid, p 407. See also p 64 ff. for whole sermon on "Thankfulness for Mercies Received a Necessary Duty".

⁵ Ibid, pp 161 f.,397. See also p 538 f. for sermon on "Intercession Every Christian's Duty".

⁶ Sermons, p 19

CHAPTER SIX

DOCTRINE OF THE LAST THINGS

Man does not cease to exist at death. His thought, for one thing, continues on as part of the life of the immortal soul. Whitefield says on this point:

"It is a certain but an awful truth that your souls will be thinking and immortal beings, even in spite of themselves. They may indeed torment, but they cannot destroy themselves. They can no more suspend their power of thought and perception, than a mirror its property of reflecting rays that fall on its surface. Do you suspect the contrary? Make the trial immediately. Command your minds to cease from thinking but for one quarter of an hour, or for half that time, and exclude every idea and reflection. Can you succeed in that attempt?.....Thus will thought follow you beyond the grave, thus will it, as an unwelcome guest, force itself upon you." ¹

Apart from this doubtful proof of the soul's continuing as a rational entity after death, Whitefield, in most cases where he is dealing with the issue of life after death, says it is to be "taken for granted" that

"all steadfastly believe that they have something within them which is called a soul, and which is capable of surviving the dissolution of the body, and of being miserable or happy to all eternity."

He opposes all who hold that the soul is annihilated at the close of this life:

"If I be annihilated when I die, then indeed temporal death is all; but it is not so, I am to live in another world; the wisest man on earth tells us that there is a future state."²

Again and again the urgency of receiving the Gospel is put forward on the grounds that all must die and, it may be, very soon./

¹ Sermons, p 321

² Ibid, p 690. See also p 273 and Wale, op.cit., p 151

soon. Whitefield always confronts man with the issues of death and life after death.¹ These issues are important for every man, because what he decides in face of them in this world will determine his fate in the next.² Furthermore, what he decides in this life will fix his fate at the Last Judgment (which is certain)

.....

There is no extensive material for a detailed study as to Whitefield's belief in the Second Coming of Christ. There is one explicit reference to the eschatological "Son of Man", familiar to Christians from the book of Daniel. When he was at Stonehouse in 1737, there was a "never to be forgotten" night, during which the sky was extraordinarily filled with light. He says about it:

"I had been expounding to many people and, some being afraid to go home, thought it my duty to accompany them and improve the occasion to stir them up to prepare for the coming of the Son of Man. In my return to the parsonage house, whilst others were rising from their beds, frightened almost to death, I and another, a poor but pious countryman, were in the field exulting in our God, and longing for that time when Jesus would be revealed from Heaven in a flame of fire." ³

Other references say that Christ will come not as "Son of Man" (which title Whitefield more consistently used to refer to Christ's humanity), but as the "Son of God":

"Observe, at midnight, when all was hushed and quiet and no one dreaming of any such thing, 'a cry was made'; the voice of the archangel and the trump of God was heard sounding the general alarm: to things in Heaven, to things in earth, and to things in the waters under the earth, 'Behold!' (Mark how this awful summons is ushered in with the word, 'behold', to engage our attention), 'Behold the bridegroom cometh!' even Jesus Christ, the desire of the nations, the Bridegroom of His spouse, the Church. Because He tarried for a while to exercise the faith of saints and give sinners space to repent, scoffers were apt to cry out, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' But the Lord is not slack concerning His promise as these men account slackness. For behold, He that/

¹ Sermons, p 269. See also p 264

² Ibid, p 704

³ Wale, op.cit., p 76

that was to come now cometh and will not tarry any longer. He cometh to be glorified in His saints, and to take vengeance on them that know not God and have not obeyed His Gospel. He cometh not as a poor despised Galilean, not to be laid in a stinking manger, not to be despised and rejected of men, not to be blind-folded, spit upon and buffeted, not to be nailed to an accursed tree; He cometh not as the Son of Man, but as He really was, the eternal Son of the eternal God. He cometh riding on the wings of the wind, in the glory of the Father and His holy angels, and to be had in everlasting reverence of all that shall be round about him! " 1

In certain quarters there was an excessive element of realised eschatology which had its dangers for such a doctrine of the Second Coming and Final Resurrection. Whitefield is afraid

"that there are some Sadducees in our days, or at least heretics, who say either that there is no resurrection of the body or that the resurrection is past already, namely, in our regeneration. Hence it is that our Lord's coming in the flesh at the day of Judgment is denied, and consequently we must throw away the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For why should we remember the Lord's death until He come to Judgment when He is already come to judge our hearts and will not come a second time? But all this is only the reasoning of unlearned, unstable men who certainly know not what they say." 2

This of course does not exclude the sight of God's judgments at work amongst the unrighteous in this earthly life.³

The quotation above, from the sermon "Christ the Believer's Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption", has just followed a statement to the effect that there is a Final Resurrection and the saved shall be bodily raised:

"By the word 'redemption' we are to understand not only a complete deliverance from all evil, but also a full enjoyment of all good, both in body and soul. I say 'both in body and soul', for the Lord is also for the body. The bodies of the saints in this life are temples of the Holy Ghost. God makes a covenant with the dust of believers: after death, though worms destroy them, yet in their flesh shall they see God.....It is plain that Jesus Christ will come hereafter to judgment, and that He ascended to Heaven with the body which He had here on earth.....and it is plain Christ's resurrection was an earnest of ours; for says the Apostle/

1 Sermons, p 258. Also p 264; Collected Works, vol.III, p 336 f

2 Ibid, p 459

3 See Wale, op.cit., p 159 f.

Apostle, 'Christ is risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that sleep", etc.(1 Cor.15:20).¹

.....

Upon the Second Coming and the Final Resurrection, there occurs the Last Judgment. Whitefield describes the events and their importance for man:

"The Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews, informs us 'that it is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the judgment', and I think that if any consideration be sufficient to awaken a drowsy world, it must be this - that there will be a day wherein these heavens shall be wrapped up like a scroll, this element melt with fervent heat, the earth and all things therein be burnt up, and every soul of every nation and language summoned to appear before the dreadful tribunal of the righteous Judge of quick and dead, to receive rewards and punishments, according to the deeds done in their bodies."²

Whitefield himself lived as if this scene were close at hand:

"We have not a moment to be idle here; the Judge is before the door. I want to have my lamp trimmed and my loins girt, and to be always and habitually and actually ready to meet the blessed Bridegroom. Then do we begin to live like ourselves and to act like those who are redeemed unto God by the precious blood of Jesus Christ!"³

The prospect of Judgment can often engender much concern even in the natural man:

"The Apostle Paul just mentioned, when brought before Felix, could think of no better means to convert that sinful man, than to reason of temperance, righteousness, and more especially of a judgment to come. The first might in some measure affect, but I am persuaded it was the last consideration, a Judgment to come, that made him tremble; and, bad as the world has now grown, yet there are few have their consciences so far seared, as to deny that there will be a reckoning hereafter."⁴

The lot of the righteous man in this world is used as an argument for the necessity of a Judgment:

"The/

¹ Sermons, p 459

² Ibid, p 255. See also p 263; also Wakeley's "Anecdotes of Whitefield", quoted by Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 419 f.

³ Collected Works, vol.II, p 357

⁴ Sermons, p 255

"The promiscuous dispensations of Providence in this life, wherein we see good men afflicted, destitute, tormented, and the wicked permitted triumphantly to ride over their heads, has always been looked upon as an indisputable argument by the generality of men that there will be a day in which God will judge the world in righteousness and administer equity unto His people."

It seems strange to hear words such as these, "the promiscuous dispensations of Providence in this life", on the lips of the Calvinist, Whitefield. Yet in this context, he apparently gave his approval to the old argument. A Last Judgment is also proved by the testimony of the man "in extremis":

Some indeed are so bold as to deny it while they are engaged in the pursuit of the lust of the eye and the pride of life. But follow them to their death-beds, ask them when their souls are ready to launch out into eternity what they then think of a judgment to come, and they will tell you they dare not give their consciences the lie any longer. They feel a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation in their hearts."¹

This was untrue of at least one unbeliever whom Whitefield encountered early in his career as a deacon in Georgia. To the question put to him, "Do you believe in a judgment to come?" the sick man twisted himself about and said, "I know not what to say to that." "Alas", said Whitefield, "sir, if all these things be true ---?", "which words", the preacher adds, "I believe gave him some concern, for he seemed after to be very uneasy, grew delirious, and departed in a day or two. Unhappy man, how quickly was he convinced that all I said was true! Now he and I are of one mind."²

At the Last Judgment, the souls of men are divided into two classes, the redeemed of God and the condemned wicked, the fate of both being determined by the state of their souls at the moment of death. And so all men are classified in the preacher's mind/

¹ Sermons, p 255

² Wale, op.cit., p 158

mind, and he knows the fate of each and can tell them so:

"As for the openly profane, the drunkard, the adulterer and suchlike, there is no doubt what will become of them: without repentance, they shall never enter into the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. No, their damnation slumbereth not ¹..... Nor is there the least doubt of the state of the true believer. For though they are despised and rejected of natural men, yet being born again of God, they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

As for the third class, the "almost Christians" ("one that is content to go, as he thinks, in a middle way to Heaven without being profane on the one hand or, as he falsely imagines, righteous over-much on the other"),

"if Jesus Christ may be our judge, they shall as certainly be rejected and disowned by Him at the Last Day as though they lived in open defiance of all His laws." ²

It is noted that, in Whitefield's thought, sometimes God is the Judge ³, and at other times, Jesus Christ. ⁴

.....

Whitefield believed strongly in the existence of Hell, the final destination of the wicked. Hell is no fairy tale to him. He tries to correct the impression some people had of hell:

"However you may think of hell, indeed it is not a painted fire; it is not an imagination to keep people in awe. Then, then you will feel the power of the Almighty arm."

This warning he has given after saying:

"There is a burning Tophet kindled by the fury of an avenging God, which will never, never be quenched. The devil longs to embrace you in his hellish arms whenever the sentence is past, where you must forever bear the weight of your sins. There is no redemption then: the day of grace is past; the door of hope is shut; mercy will no more be offered, but you must be shut out from God forever. O who can dwell with everlasting burnings!" ⁵

Couple such preaching with the greatest voice of the century/

¹ See sermons, p 525

² Ibid, p 256

³ Ibid, p 261

⁴ Ibid, pp 213, 459

⁵ Ibid, p 213 (preached 1739, published 1740). See also Tyerman, vol. II, p 460 f. (preached about 1763)

century and the actions of a born dramatist and it is no wonder the simple people hung upon his words. In the first place then, Whitefield deplores the natural tendency to disbelieve in hell.

"How natural it is to all mankind," he says, "to believe there is a place of happiness because they wish it may be so, and on the contrary, how averse they are to believe in a place of torment because they wish it may be so. But God is true and just, and as surely as the good shall go into everlasting happiness, so the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment." ¹

Secondly, it is the unrepentant sinner who suffers this fate as has been seen.

"There is no hope of any who live and die in their sins but that they will dwell with devils and damned spirits to all eternity.....If you die in that condition, you are shut out of all hope and mercy forever and shall pass into ceaseless and endless misery." ²

There is no repenting in hell, no "second chance", no possibility of improvement or progress. ³

Thirdly, hell has in addition the following features. It is the abode of devils and fallen spirits ⁴; a place of everlasting torments (chiefly burnings but also spiritual tortures such as remembrance of past sins, recognising companions in sin in this life whom they have helped to damnation, etc.) ⁵; a place of pitiless misery, bitter remorse and deprivation of all the pleasures the sinner has known in this life ⁶; a place of exclusion from God's presence and, consequently, of a lack of peace, of hope in His goodness and mercy, and of answers to prayer. ⁷ In other words, /

¹ Wale, op.cit., p 151; also p 367 f.

² Sermons, p 331

³ Ibid, p 272

⁴ Ibid, pp 213, 272, 300, etc.

⁵ Ibid, pp 213, 255, 270 f., 300, 321, etc.

⁶ Ibid, pp 214, 310, 321, 274, etc.

⁷ Ibid, pp 213, 331-333, 617, 652, etc. Cf. "What is hell but to be absent from Christ? If there was no other, that would be bad enough", (Wakeley, op.cit., p 362). However, his chief emphasis is that hell is a definite place.

words, Whitefield's hell was a combination of the Old Testament conception of "Sheol", of the Apocalyptic Gehenna, and Dante's "Inferno", the latter through Milton's "Paradise Lost".

Finally it must be conceded that, while pointing his listeners to the reality of hell as the certain fate of the wicked after death, Whitefield repeatedly expressed the hope that it would not be merely the prospect of such a fate alone which would induce repentance in their hearts:

"But I hope those amongst whom I am now preaching the Kingdom of God are not so disingenuous as to need to be driven to their duty by the terrors of the Lord, but rather desire to be drawn by the cords of love." ¹

Referring to the inhabitants of Georgia in 1738, after his first work amongst them, he claimed:

"I have striven to draw them by the cords of love because the obedience resulting from that principle I take to be the most genuine and lasting." ²

.....

In the imagery of joyfulness familiar to tradition, Heaven and the blessed future state of the redeemed is described as engagement

"to all eternity in singing praises to Him that sits upon the throne and to the Lamb forever. And this is to be the employment of all those who are admitted into this glorious place, where neither sin nor sinner is admitted, where no scoffer can come.....without repentance. This must be done before any can be admitted into the glorious mansions of God which are prepared for all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth."

To the righteous believers "at the right hand of Jesus", he says:

"A few days or weeks or years more and then you will be beyond their reach (i.e. of the men of this world and devils in hell)/

¹ Sermons, p 300. See also pp 269, 327

² Wale, op.cit., p 154. See also Whitefield's prayer, p 427

hell), you will be in the heavenly Jerusalem. There, is all harmony and love; there, is all joy and delight; there, the weary soul is at rest." ¹

A favourite couplet of his for conveying the consolations of the next world to a suffering or bereaved friend was:

"Where sin and strife and sorrow cease,
And all is calm and joy and peace." ²

In this supernal realm, bodies are restored and glorified, even though they have known weakness or sickness here on earth³; and friends and relatives will recognise each other⁴, as well as share eternal life with all the saintly souls of past ages.⁵

But despite the fact that Whitefield used the imagery of poetry and the Bible to draw a picture of Heaven, he yet realised that the essential point about its life was its spiritual character.

"The generality of people form strange ideas of Heaven. And because the Scriptures, in condescension to the weakness of our capacities, describe it by images taken from earthly delights and human grandeur, therefore they are apt to carry their delights no higher, and at the best to form for themselves a kind of Mahomedan paradise. But permit me to tell you - and God grant it may sink deep into your hearts - Heaven is rather a state than a place; and consequently, unless you are previously disposed by a suitable state of mind, you could not be happy, even in Heaven itself.....and this made the great Preston, when he was about to die, turn to his friends, saying, 'I am changing my place but not my company'. He had conversed with God and good men on earth; he was going to keep up the same and infinitely more refined communion with God, His holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, in Heaven." ⁶

¹ Sermons, p 336. See also pp 300, 461, etc.

² Collected Works, vol.III, p 318

³ Sermons, pp 309, 459 f, etc.

⁴ Ibid, pp 310, 461, etc.

⁵ Ibid, 310; Wale, op.cit., p 101

⁶ Sermons, p 143. Cf. p 499 and especially, p 703. See also "The Putting on of the New Man, A Certain Mark of the Real Christian. A Sermon preached at the Tabernacle on the fifth of January, 1750", p 18.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

A Brief Review of Some Opinions Regarding the
Place and Worth of Whitefield's Theology.

In 1737 Whitefield said:

"In a little while we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, where I must give a strict account of the doctrine I have preached, and you of your improvement under it." ¹

The purpose in this concluding chapter is to review as briefly yet as comprehensively as possible, the manner in which Whitefield's contemporaries assessed that doctrine for which, under God, he felt such a high sense of responsibility. This is the primary aim; but in addition, a supplementary intention is to disclose the judgment of biographers and historians of later generations. It has been thought profitable to do this as there appears to be a conflict of evidence as to the source of Whitefield's acknowledged influence as one of the foremost leaders of the Evangelical Revival. The conflict is, broadly speaking, between the opinions of men of Whitefield's time and subsequent judges. The question which is relevant to this study and which it is hoped to answer in this fashion, is: to what extent was Whitefield's theology responsible for his deserving a place in the front rank of those to whom the Revival owed its success?

In the first instance, it is noted that few since the eighteenth century have attributed much worth to his printed sermons/

¹ Sermons, p 544

sermons, journals and other writings, Reference has already been made to this. On the American side of the Atlantic, the "New York Observer" says this:

"We read his printed sermons and they disappoint us. Of all men in the world, he was the last who should have published his sermons.....So much did he owe to (other) circumstances, that his eloquence cannot be appreciated by any account of it which can be given verbally, or be delineated on paper. Vain is it therefore to look into his printed sermons to find his power." ¹

Benjamin Franklin expressed a similar opinion², and the embarrassment occasioned to Whitefield's friends by his lack of clarity in thought and judgment in some of his writings must have been very real at times, and can be understood by even a cursory perusal of his opponents' published attacks on them. ³ It is not surprising in fact that he did have opponents, particularly in his early years. W.B. Fitzgerald, as a comparatively recent writer on Whitefield, says:

"Among the men of the eighteenth century, George Whitefield stands out unique. At sixteen he was a tapster; at twenty six he was the most brilliant and popular preacher the modern world has ever known. The secret of his power must always remain to a large extent a mystery. His published sermons make the reader wonder if it really existed. His journals fail to reveal the attractiveness of his personality. Even the estimates of his contemporaries leave one perplexed and almost incredulous. Yet the extraordinary power of the man is beyond all question."

"Whitefield's learning was of very mediocre quality, while Wesley was a scholar, a Fellow of a University, a lecturer in her schools." "One can base no theory sufficient to explain his (Whitefield's) popularity on either the 'Journal' or the 'Sermons'. There is far higher merit in John Wesley's plain, crisp English than in Whitefield's florid periods. Yet he must have possessed a strange personal magnetism. People were carried away, not so much by what he said, as by the way in which he said it. Perhaps the only reliable estimate that can be made must be based upon the judgment of his contemporaries.....A Pulpit orator who could charm the cynical Horace Walpole, and make even the passionless Chesterfield forget himself, and who could awaken envy in Garrick, and/

¹ Wakeley, op.cit., p 30 f

² See p 100 supra, footnote number 1.

³ See "A Fair and Impartial Account of the Debate in the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, 6th. October, 1748, By Dr. John Erskine", Edinburgh, 1748, p 6 f., and 15 ff.

and move the critical admiration of David Hume must have been no ordinary man. There was more than oratory. John Richard Green, one of the most sober of historians, finds the real secret of his influence in the 'intense reality' of his preaching, 'its earnestness of belief, its deep, tremulous sympathy with the sin and sorrow of mankind.'" ¹

Tyerman in his exhaustive biography of Whitefield confirms the poor quality of Whitefield's productions as compared with sermons of the late nineteenth century, but he does not go so far as J.H. Overton. Tyerman says:

"Whitefield was the greatest orator of his age. He never stretched after profundity of thought. He made no pretensions of excelling in Biblical exegesis. A 'fine highly ornamental style' he seems to have eschewed as much as Wesley did. He preached simple truths with all his might; and witnessed success such as is rarely given to a minister to see." ²

But Overton refers to Whitefield as "simply a guileless, self-denying, but ill-trained and very injudicious enthusiast, in the nineteenth rather than the eighteenth century's acceptation of the term." He adds that Whitefield's "faults were all faults of the head and not of the heart; he was rash and indiscreet; he frequently violated the rules of good taste; he was deficient in theological - and indeed in all - learning." "As to Whitefield's sermons, it is unfortunate for his reputation as a preacher that any specimens should have been preserved. It is quite unnecessary to spend any time upon them, for they can hardly be said to come under the head of 'literature' at all."³ (He is dealing with the "literature" of the Revival). This judgment is far too limited, arbitrary, and harsh. Every sentence of it must be qualified to obtain a fair picture of Whitefield's theology over the whole of his life. The views of Tyerman and Fitzgerald are nearer the mark/

¹ Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol.I, pp 257, 266, 273

² Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I p 94

³ J.H. Overton, "The Evangelical Revival", p 30 ff.

mark. It could be justly pointed out that the "New York Observer" was not a theological publication, that Benjamin Franklin was an unbeliever, and that J.H. Overton, an Anglican, was more interested in the Revival as it concerned the Evangelical party of the Church of England to which Methodism had a large share in giving birth. It should also be observed that he entirely underestimates the impact of Whitefield upon the aristocracy of the day, and, if contrary in this opinion to all other historians and the undoubted facts of the case, he should surely be believed with reserve in other matters.¹ J.C. Ryle, another biographer, considers the sermons are disappointing but underrated nevertheless.² Is this true?

It would perhaps be best, having raised the question of the worth of Whitefield's printed sermons apart from his preaching powers, to examine shortly the other factors which are held to have made him impressive as a preacher. Here there is no disagreement in the opinions of either contemporaries or later judges. We have, for example, the impressions of an eyewitness of services in New York (1739):

"The endowments of his mind are uncommon; his wit is quick and piercing, his imagination lively and florid; and as far as I can discern, both are under the direction of a solid judgment. He/

1 Overton, op.cit., p 30 - "He was not at all likely to make any permanent mark upon such men as those who have left what one might call testimonials to his preaching powers, hard-headed men like David Hume and Benjamin Franklin, and clever rakes like Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Chesterfield. But the immediate effects he produced were more striking than even those produced by Wesley. Thousands and tens of thousands listened to his simple and earnest words and were, at least temporarily, startled from their security. And as very many of the uneducated folk who heard him were really touched and did lead better lives in consequence, it seems a pity that he should not have confined himself to them." Cf. with this the long list of noble hearers of Whitefield given by Tyerman, op.cit., vol.II, pp 209-212 and the number and character of the letters Whitefield wrote to aristocratic believers, Collected Works, vols.I-III; also the opinion of Fitzgerald above.

2 J.C.Ryle, "The Christian Leaders of the Last Century", p 51

He has great mastery of words, but studies much plainness of speech. He spends not his zeal in trifles." ¹

His earnestness, zeal and fervour were certainly part of the secret of his power to bring the truths of his theology home to the hearts of the people:

"Whitefield was full of religious feeling. Except when sleeping, he seemed to pray and praise always and everywhere. He was 'full of faith and the Holy Ghost'. A vivid spirituality inflamed his soul. His ideas of God and of Christ, of sin and of holiness, of faith and pardon, of heaven and hell, were not merely thoughts but sentiments. Without this, Whitefield's eloquence would only have been elocution, and his sermons, instead of being 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds', would have been - what? - theatrical orations!" ²

J.C. Ryle also refers to his tremendous earnestness and the immense amount of feeling and pathos in his preaching.

Summing up Whitefield's Scottish visits, D. Butler writes:

"Whitefield's preaching settled doubt by its transparent earnestness and conviction. The preacher was single-minded and his message had the authority which strong conviction always gives. 'All religion', says Mr. Leslie Stephen, 'historically speaking, has depended and must depend for the masses of mankind, upon authority. A creed built on elaborate syllogisms is a creed with 'perhaps' in it; and no such creed can command men's emotions.' Whitefield's preaching had no 'perhaps' in it, and its authority rested on the preacher's message finding its vindication in the hearer's experience. It was not so much his grasp of the truth, as the grasp of the truth upon him, that made him what he was. It was the being possessed by the truth that enabled him to inspire others and made him a prophet.....His preaching awakened and inspired, for the cardinal principles of the Christian faith were ever on his heart and on his tongue. It was the power of the Christian message re-discovered, and preached with apostolic fervour." ³

These late opinions are undoubtedly true to the facts, being built up from accounts contemporary to Whitefield. ⁴

He/

¹ Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 329 f.

² Ibid, vol.II, p 629. Cf. vol.I, p 94, and Townsend, Workman, Eayrs, op.cit., vol.I, p 266

³ D. Butler, op.cit., p 64 f.

⁴ See "New York Observer", quoted by Wakeley, op.cit., p 35; also funeral sermons by John Newton, Parsons, Edwards, as in Gillies, "Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield", pp 298, 343, 320, and John Wesley, "A Sermon on the Death of the Rev.G.W.", p 16 ff.; also "The Weekly History", no.8, p 2 and no.22, p 2

He had a marvellous voice, the voice of the century, unequalled both for carrying power¹, range of expression and easy natural flow. He was an artist as regards arresting and dramatic action. Gillies says:

"He had a strong and musical voice, and a wonderful command of it. His pronunciation was not only proper but manly and graceful. Nor was he ever at a loss for the most natural and strong expressions. Yet these in him were but lower qualities. The grand forces of his eloquence were an exceedingly lively imagination, which made people think they saw what he described; an action still more lively if possible, by which, while every accent spoke to the ear, every feature of his face, every motion of his hands, and every gesture spoke to the eye; so that the most dissipated and thoughtless found their attention involuntarily fixed, and the dullest and most ignorant could not but understand." ²

He employed great variety in his preaching, changing the tone and emphasis often in order to gain interest.

"He could be a son of thunder or of consolation; blow the brazen trump of the law or strike with gentle touch the silver strings of the Gospel. He could thunder or be as calm as a summer's evening; as grand as the majesty of a howling storm, or as mild as the breath of spring." ³

Add all these things together and one might arrive at the main conclusions expressed by the nineteenth century and later biographers. But it is not the powers of an orator primarily which engaged the attention of Whitefield's clerical contemporaries. It was rather his faith and the doctrines he taught which commended him to those whose criticism (as preachers themselves) should be regarded with respect.

However, even to many who were not clergymen, the doctrine of his printed sermons was received with approval and marked effects. It is a fact that, on two important occasions at least, the/

¹ Note B. Franklin's experiment in Philadelphia when Whitefield was preaching - on which occasion Franklin calculated that Whitefield could reach 30,000 with his voice ("Memoirs of the Life and Writings of B. Franklin", p 128). See also Belcher, op.cit., p 102.

² Op.cit., p 284

³ Wakeley, op.cit., p 25

the reading of them led to an awakening and to conversions. The first was in England:

"At a place near Dudley, called Guarnal, I heard of a whole company awakened by reading my poor sermons." ¹

The other was in America:

"Whitefield's preaching and especially the reading of his printed sermons, in Virginia, led to the founding of the Presbyterian Church in that State, whence it has extended to the South and the South-west." ²

"When I came to Virginia (1745)", Whitefield writes, "I found that the Word of the Lord had run and was glorified. During my preaching at Glasgow, some persons wrote some of my extemporaneous sermons and printed them almost as fast as I preached them. Some of these were carried to Virginia, and one of them fell into the hands of Samuel Morris. He read and found benefit. He then read them to others; they were awakened and convinced. A fire was kindled; opposition was made; other labourers were sent for; and many, both white people and negroes, were converted to the Lord." ³

It could be added that the reading of the sermon "What Think Ye of Christ?" led to the conversion of James Hervey, and that further, the reading of Whitefield's sermon on "The New Birth" led Andrew Kinsman to Christ, a man who later became an outstanding minister.

Another fact cannot be overlooked. By about 1763, Whitefield had published nearly sixty sermons (more than Wesley had at that time ⁴), and many of these, printed in London, Scotland, and America, had run into several editions. Such a demand shows plainly that his sermons were widely read and appreciated during his lifetime. If the literary standard of these was as low as most seem to think, there must have been only one consideration remaining to popularise them, viz., the doctrine they contained. Therefore/

¹ Collected Works, vol.III, p 34

² Dr. Abel Stevens, "History of Methodism", vol.I, p 392 f.

³ Gillies, op.cit., p 150 (from Whitefield's MSS)

⁴ See p 117 supra

Therefore, thirdly, it must be stated definitely that to all who lived through the Evangelical Revival - who were leaders of it or converts to it or sympathisers with it - the fundamental doctrines Whitefield preached made the greatest appeal. All else they regarded as subsidiary, even though necessary. His adherence to the same doctrines was most noticeable. He repeated again and again the same few, simple, evangelical truths of Christianity. He admitted that this was his purpose in life, and he claimed at the end of it that he had been consistent throughout:

"Though I am near fifty five years old (1769), yet I thank God I am so far from changing my principles, which I am sure I was taught by God's Word and Spirit, that I am more and more confirmed that if I were to die this moment, I hope I should have strength and courage given me to say that I am more convinced of the efficacy and power of those truths which I preached when I was twenty than when I first preached them." ¹

A year later he wrote in his will:

"To all my other Christian benefactors and more intimate acquaintance, I leave my most hearty thanks and blessing, assuring them that I am more and more convinced of the undoubted reality and infinite importance of the grand Gospel truths which I have from time to time delivered; and am so far from repenting my delivering them in an itinerant way, that, had I strength equal to my inclination, I would preach them from pole to pole, not only because I have found them to be the power of God to the salvation of my own soul, but because I am as much assured that the Great Head of the Church hath called me by His Word, Providence, and Spirit to act in this way, as the sun shines at noon day." ²

Testimonials to this integrity, as others saw it, are not wanting. In an "Apology for the Presbyterians in Scotland who are Hearers of the Rev. George Whitefield", ³ one said:

"With respect to apostacy and defection we know no truth of God to the knowledge of which he has attained that ever he again denied, but persists therein steadfastly. It is his doctrine, indefatigable labour, zeal, and fervent preaching of Christ to the souls/

¹ Sermons, p 693

² Gillies, op.cit., p 354

³ Edinburgh ?, 174-, p 13

souls of men, with the blessed effects of it which we observe, that commends him to our love and esteem."

At the conclusion of Whitefield's life, Wesley confirmed this characteristic:

"In whatsoever concerned himself, he was pliable and flexible. In this case, he was easy to be intreated, easy to be convinced or persuaded. But he was immovable in the things of God, or wherever his conscience was concerned. None could persuade, any more than affright him, to vary in the least point from that integrity which was inseparable from his whole character, and which regulated all his words and actions. Herein he did
'Stand as an iron pillar strong,
And steadfast as a wall of brass.'"

Wesley proceeds next to account for this attitude of Whitefield to his doctrine. He says it was due to the faith, hope and love revealed by the deceased's beliefs:

"If it be inquired what was the foundation of this integrity, or of his sincerity, courage, patience, and every other valuable and amiable quality, it is easy to give an answer. It was not the excellence of his natural temper; not the strength of his understanding; it was not the forces of education; no, nor the advice of his friends. It was no other than faith in a bleeding Lord: 'Faith of the operation of God'. It was 'a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away'. It was 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which was given unto him', filling his soul with tender, disinterested love to every child of man. From this source rose this tide of eloquence which frequently bore down all before it. From this, that astonishing force of persuasion, which the most hardened sinners could not resist." ¹

Further, John Newton agrees with the eyewitness of Whitefield's services in New York quoted above (p 192), that Whitefield's zeal was "not like wild-fire, but directed by sound principles and a sound judgment", and then goes on -

"Though he was very young when he came out, the Lord soon gave him a very clear view of the Gospel. In the sermons he published soon after his first appearance, there is the same evangelical strain observable as in those he preached in his last years. Time and observation, what he felt and what he saw, enlarged his experience, and gave his preaching an increasing ripeness and favour, but from first to last he preached the same Gospel, and was determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified/

¹ J. Wesley, "A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield", p 20

crucified. His steadiness and perseverance in the truth was the more remarkable, considering the difficulties and snares he was sometimes beset with." ¹

Thus the consistency of Whitefield in his doctrine over the thirty years of his ministry is proved. Some summaries of Whitefield's theology follow and it will readily be seen what were the "cardinal principles" of it, what were the few truths he assiduously reiterated, as these appeared to his contemporaries. As early as March 26, 1740, the Rev. Joseph Smith, a minister of Charleston, Carolina, preached a sermon vindicating Whitefield, in which he said:

"I shall give my opinion of the doctrines he insisted upon among us. They were doctrines agreeable to the dictates of reason; evidently founded upon Scripture; exactly correspondent with the Articles of the Establishment; of great use and necessity in forming the Christian life, which I had early imbibed from the best writers and systems, from which I have never yet seen reason to recede. To be more particular:

One of the doctrines which he has hardly passed over in silence in any single discourse is that of original sin - a truth so manifest in Scripture that I am almost of the opinion that it is impossible any sincere, diligent and unprejudiced inquirer should miss it. By original sin, I mean nothing less than the imputation of Adam's first sin to all his posterity by ordinary generation, which imputation is the result of his being constituted to act for them in the extensive capacity of a legal representative, the consequence of which is that inherent corruption of nature and those sinful propensities which we are now born with into the world. As to the point of imputation, it is a doctrine, it must be confessed, of more intricacy, about which it is therefore possible that a well-meaning man may labour under some scruples, while perhaps he allows the depravity of human nature. Original sin is a truth we feel in every power of our souls, what we read upon our own hearts, and which is indeed stamped upon universal nature within our horizon, and which, the more righteous any man is, the more he feels and groans under. We need not wonder then that our late incomparable preacher should insist upon original sin, when we consider not only in what an incontestible manner he proved it, but of what vast importance it must be."

Another doctrine we have lately had in the warmest language impressed upon us is that Pauline one of justification by faith alone. And here the preacher vindicated himself from all suspicions of Antinomian error and the opening of a door to licentious manners. For while on the one hand, he earnestly contended/

¹ Gillies, op.cit., p 343 f.

contended for our justification as the free gift of God by faith alone in the blood of Christ, an article of faith delivered to the saints of old, so on the other hand, he took special care to guard against the licentious abuse of it and would not make void the law, when he asserted that good works were the necessary fruits and evidences of true faith, telling us plainly that a man was justified these three ways : meritoriously by Christ, instrumentally by faith alone, declaratively, by good works." "Hitherto then our preacher is orthodox in his doctrine, which both excludes licentiousness, establishes the law and exalts free grace, the evident design and language of the Gospel."

"Regeneration was another doctrine the excellent man insisted upon: hardly a single sermon but he mentioned it, sometimes more than twice; and one, and perhaps the best of his discourses, was 'ex professo' upon the subject." It is a New Testament doctrine, due to our Lord's own words. "Our regeneration results in its necessity from original sin." "As we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, God must quicken us by his Spirit." "For until we know the power of Christ's resurrection, we cannot enter into Heaven." "Pleasure is the result of harmony, the nature must agree with the object; there must be a great change upon the nature to make us susceptible of the pleasures of God's presence."

"Which naturally introduces another doctrine nearly allied to this, the impressions, or (which was the preacher's own phrase) inward feelings of the Spirit. Here he guarded against the invidious censure of assuming the character of an apostle. He renounced all pretensions to the extraordinary powers and signs of apostleship, gifts of healing, speaking with tongues, the faith of miracles, things peculiar to the age of inspiration and extinct with them. He also allowed these feelings were not in every person, or at all times, in the same degree; and that though a full assurance were attainable and what every one should labour to attain, yet not of absolute necessity to the being of a Christian. Only he asserted that we might feel the Spirit of God in His sanctifying and saving impressions and witnessing with our own spirits. And what is there in all this repugnant to reason? What is there in it but what is perfectly agreeable to Scripture? How can we be led by the Spirit, or have joy in the Holy Ghost without some sensible perceptions of it?" etc.

"All the doctrines now mentioned are primitive, Protestant, Puritanic ones, which our good fathers, Conformists and Dissenters, have filled their writings with, and as Dr. Watts has well observed, 'They fill Heaven apace, for God is with them'. Yet all that vast reverence with which I heard these doctrines from the mouth of our famous preacher, could not win my applause or approbation of some few harsher epithets and expressions which dropped from his lips. These in my opinion, may be pronounced failings, but such as often attend a warm zeal for orthodoxy in the points of the last importance, arise from a principle of conscience, and are found interwoven with the brightest characters, and he that has none, let him cast the first stone." ¹ (Note: the underlining here and in subsequent quotations on Whitefield's doctrine is not the author's).

This/

¹ Sermons, p xxi ff. Note the supporting Preface written in 1749 by the Revs. Dr. Coleman and Mr. Cooper of Boston.

This last reference is possibly to Whitefield's preaching in an extreme form his newly-embraced Calvinistic predestinarianism or a strong denunciation of non-converted ministers. Smith's judgment has been inserted at such length because it represents so exact a review of the greater part of Whitefield's theology as it has been disclosed in the previous chapters (*supra*), because it well serves as a basis for comparison with all other views (and in this reveals the uniformity of Whitefield's theology throughout his life), and because it is one of the first and certainly the fullest of the early published reviews of his theology.

That was the assessment of an American divine and it is as well to place beside it one or two others representative of American judgment. The "New York Observer" (already quoted) said:

"Whitefield's power as a pulpit orator cannot be separated from his pious emotions or his religious views. Had he embraced a theory of religion less emotional, more after the pattern of rationalists or ritualists, his eloquence would have been lost to the world. Never would his soul have taken fire, nor his lips glowed with the burning coal of enthusiastic passion. But he believed in man's ruin by sin, in the certain interminable woe that awaited the impenitent, in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and the free offer of salvation through faith in the Cross. Such were his views and under these convictions he looked upon his audiences. He saw but one hope set before them and, with his whole soul moved by the love of Christ on the one hand and the love of souls on the other, he pressed every hearer, with the energy of a dying man speaking to dying men, to accept the great salvation. Nor do we think that the pulpit can reach its appropriate power, nor for any length of time retain it, unless these grand cardinal doctrines of grace are the inspiring themes." ¹

Dr. Pemberton of Boston said in his funeral sermon on Whitefield:

"To convince sinners that they were by nature children of wrath; by practice, transgressors of the Divine law (i.e. guilty of 'original' and 'actual' sin); and in consequence of this, exposed to the vengeance of offended Heaven; to display the transcendent excellency of a Saviour, and persuade awakened minds to/

¹ Wakeley, op.cit., p 36 f.

to confide in His merits and righteousness, as the only hope of a guilty world; to impress upon the professors of the Gospel the necessity not only of an outward reformation, but an internal change by the influences of the Spirit; to lead the faithful to a zealous practice of the various duties of the Christian life, that they may evidence the sincerity of their faith and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour: these were the reigning subjects of his pulpit discourses. If sinners were converted, if saints were built up in faith, holiness and comfort, he attained his utmost aim. He was not a contracted bigot, but embraced Christians of every denomination in the arms of his charity and acknowledged them to be children of the same Father." ¹

Turning to Scotland, we find that Whitefield's theology also found a ready response in the majority of hearers. Willison of Dundee represents the opinion of the "moderate" evangelical section of the Church and the greatest number of those who crowded to listen to him. In a letter of October 8, 1741 (after Whitefield had made his first visit), he writes:

"He is thoroughly a Calvinist and sound in the doctrines of free grace - in the doctrine of original sin, the new birth, justification by Christ, the necessity of imputed righteousness, the operations of the Holy Ghost, etc. These he makes his great theme, drives the point home to the conscience, and God attends it with great power. And as God has enlightened him gradually in these things, so he is still ready to receive more light, and so soon as he gets it, he is most frank in declaring it." ²

Aminister of Aberdeen (?Ogilvie), also after Whitefield's first visit, wrote:

"Did he preach another Jesus or another doctrine, he ought justly to be rejected, but this is not the case. And yet this very thing is advanced as an argument against him. It is said he advances nothing new, and I allow it. This gives his friends joy." ³

Another Scottish gentleman said:

"The Episcopal clergy gave him no countenance though some few of their people did. And in the Established Church of Scotland, some of the more rigid Presbyterians would not hold communion with him on account of his connection with the Church of England, and his seeming to assume the office of an 'Evangelist', peculiar in their apprehension, to the first ages of the Church; while some, who/

¹ Gillies, op.cit., p 305 f

² MacFarlan, op.cit., p 90

³ Gillies, op.cit., p 89

who affected to be thought more sensible or more modish or polite, were mightily dissatisfied with him for preaching the Calvinist doctrines of Election, Original Sin, Efficacious Grace, Justification through Faith, and the Perseverance of the saints; and for inveighing against the play-house, dancing assemblies, games of chance, haunting taverns, vanity and extravagance in dress, and levity in behaviour and conversation. Some gentlemen and ladies who went to hear would not go a second time because he disturbed them by insisting on man's miserable and dangerous state by nature, and the strictness and holiness essential to Christian character..... Many Presbyterians begin to think more mildly and candidly than before of the ministers and members of the Church of England." ¹

Finally for Scotland, there is the conclusion of the learned Dr. Gillies himself, the friend as well as the first biographer of Whitefield and the collector of his "Works". He refers to the prominence of Whitefield's catholic love and Scripture doctrine:

"Being early convinced of the great hurt that has been done to Christianity by a bigotted spirit, he insisted not upon the peculiar tenets of a party, but upon the universally-interesting doctrines of Holy Scripture concerning the ruin of man by sin and his recovery by Divine grace, doctrines the truth of which he himself had deeply felt. To make men sensible of the misery of their alienation from God, and of the necessity of justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and of a life of devotedness to God, was the principal aim of all his discourses. 'The only Methodism I desire to know', says he, 'is a holy method of dying to ourselves and of living to God.' By this description, he was far from intending to confine true religion to the exercises of devotion. By 'living to God' he meant a constant endeavour after conformity to the Divine Will in all things." ²

If there were any in Scotland who quarrelled with his doctrine, it was the section who disagreed with his doctrine of the Church, his ecumenicity, as has been seen.³ D. Butler's summing/

¹ Gillies, op.cit., p 101 ff.

² Op. cit., p 286 f. Cf. Letter of Scottish gentleman to his friend ("The Weekly History", no.32, p 2): "October 21, 1741... Any tainted with Arian, Socinian or Antinomian errors were plainly warned and reproved; his reasonings were Scriptural, clear and conclusive. Mr. Whitefield's doctrine has had considerable influence to show them the danger of bigotry and its pernicious tendency to mar true piety."

³ See p 154 f supra.

summing up of the secret of Whitefield's success in Scotland, so far as it concerned the truths he preached, has been quoted already (p 193 supra), and may be taken as very just.

Considering thirdly, the opinion of his theology in England, we find a similar unanimity as to his essential doctrines. In 1741, one writer went so far as to publish a comparison between Whitefield and Wycliff. He says both men and their followers preached not only in churches but also in open fields, churchyards etc. without special licence. Wycliff was a "glorious reformer" from Popery and the other is "the illustrious restorer of the doctrines of the Reformation". Wycliff laboured to "reduce the Church to that purity which she attained two hundred years after him; the other endeavoured to revive those truths which she universally embraced two hundred years before him: both men of like zeal, both treated in the same manner. Mr. Whitefield preaches against and laments the degeneracy of our modern divines with respect to the doctrines of original sin, free-will, justification of man, of good works, of the new birth or regeneration, of works before justification, of predestination and election, etc. He militates against moral preachers and their doctrines, as well as against the immorality of men's lives." ¹

Once in April, 1750, James Hervey met Whitefield (and others), and was so much in accord with Whitefield's outlook and temper that he could write to a friend thus:

"For my part, I never beheld so fair a copy of our Lord, such a living image of the Saviour, such exalted delight in God, such enlarged benevolence to man, such a steady faith in the Divine promises, and such a fervent zeal for the Divine glory; and all this sweetened with the most engaging cheerfulness of temper, and regulated by all the sobriety of reason and wisdom of Scripture; in so much that I cannot forbear applying the wise man's encomium/

¹ Pamphlet by J. Lewis, quoted by Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 457 f.

enconium of an illustrious woman, to this eminent minister of the everlasting Gospel: 'Many sons have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.'" ¹

More specific as to doctrine are the following extracts from typical funeral sermons preached in England in 1770.

Henry Venn said:

"Though the children of Christ are all for signs and for wonders in Israel (Isaiah 8:18), yet do they differ as one star differs from another in glory. Talents, grace and zeal eminently dignify some and draw the eyes of men upon them. In the foremost of this rank, doubtless, is the Rev. Mr. Whitefield to be placed: for his doctrine was the doctrine of the Reformers, of the Apostles, and of Christ: it was the doctrine of free grace, of God's everlasting love. Through Jesus, he preached the forgiveness of sins, and perseverance in holy living; through his faithfulness and power, engaged them to his people." "The total ruin of the human race by the Fall, the complete recovery of believers in Christ, His dying love, and the unsearchable riches of His grace to be known experimentally in this life, though fully to be displayed in the next, and the infatuation of sinners, led captive by their lusts down to the chambers of death: these grand truths, of more weight than words can paint, fired his soul.....And that this great multitude of people were gathered, just as the primitive churches of Christ, by the truths they heard, and the spiritual benefits they received under his word, is evident beyond a reasonable doubt." "His great object was to exalt Christ crucified and when his hearers were brought to the knowledge of salvation, his point was gained and his soul was satisfied.....Truly cordial and catholic in his love for all who appeared to love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, he never desired to see his congregation increased by those who had evangelical pastors of their own." ²

F.S. Edwards said much the same things. ³

Selected finally is John Wesley's able resume of Whitefield's theology:

"First let us keep close to the grand Scripture doctrines which he everywhere delivered. There are many doctrines of a less essential nature with regard to which even the sincere children of God (such is the present weakness of human understanding) are and have been divided for many ages (predestination, etc.). In these we must think and let think, we must 'agree to disagree' (Whitefield's own phrase). But meantime let us hold fast the essentials of 'the faith which was once delivered to the saints', and/

¹ Gillies, op.cit., p 185 (footnote). Doddridge was present on this occasion. It must be remembered that Hervey had already printed his "Theron and Aspasio", an exposition of Calvinism to which Wesley took great exception - see p 87 supra.

² Ibid, p 329 ff.

³ Ibid, p 318 ff.

and which this champion of God so strongly insisted on at all time and in all places. His fundamental point was, give God all the glory of whatever is good in man. And in the business of salvation set Christ as high and man as low as possible. With this principle he and his friends at Oxford, the original Methodists, so called, set out. Their grand principle was, there is no power (by nature) and no merit in man. All power to think, speak, or act aright is in or from the Spirit of Christ: and all merit is (not in man how high soever in grace, but merely) in the blood of Christ. 'All men are dead in trespasses' and sins: all are 'by nature children of wrath': all are 'guilty before God', liable to death, temporal and eternal. We become interested in what Christ has done and suffered, 'not by works, lest any man should boast', but by faith alone. 'We conclude' says the Apostle, 'that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law.' And 'to as many as' thus receive Him, giveth He power 'to become the sons of God: even to those that believe in His name, who are born, not of the will of man, but of God.' And 'except a man' be thus born again, he cannot 'see the Kingdom of God'. But all who are thus born of the Spirit, have the 'Kingdom of God within them'. That 'mind is in them which was in Christ Jesus', enabling them to 'walk as Christ also walked.' His indwelling Spirit makes them both holy in heart and 'holy in all manner of conversation'.....May they not be summed up as it were in two words, 'the new birth and justification by faith'?"

Wesley's concluding note in this commendation of Whitefield's example, refers to the latter's ecumenicity, his widely inclusive definition of those who are within the Church of Christ:

"Is there any fruit of the grace of God with which he was eminently endowed and the want of which, among the children of God, he frequently and passionately lamented? There is one - that is, catholic love. That sincere and tender affection which is due to all those who, we have reason to believe, are the children of God by faith. In other words, all those in every persuasion who 'fear God and work righteousness'. He longed to see all who had 'tasted of the good word', of a truly catholic spirit. Who is a man of catholic spirit? One who loves as friends or brethren in the Lord, as joint partakers of the present Kingdom of Heaven and fellow-heirs of His eternal Kingdom, all of whatever opinion, mode of worship or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus, who love God and men, who, rejoicing to please and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil and zealous of good works. He is a man of truly catholic spirit who bears all these continually upon his heart; who, having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons and an earnest desire of their welfare does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as plead their cause before men..... Was not his the spirit of our dear friend?" ¹

Wesley/

¹ "A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield", p 23 ff. and 27 f.

Wesley was challenged in "The Gospel Magazine" immediately after this sermon on the grounds that these doctrines he had specified were not the ones everywhere preached by Whitefield. In an outburst of Calvinistic zeal, the editor said that Whitefield's "grand fundamental doctrines which he everywhere preached were the everlasting Covenant between the Father and the Son, and absolute predestination flowing therefrom." To this Wesley replied succinctly (and with perfect truth so far as can be judged by Whitefield's extant works):

"I join issue on this head. Whether the doctrines of the eternal covenant and of absolute predestination are fundamental doctrines of Christianity or not, I affirm again 1. That Mr. Whitefield did not everywhere preach these, and 2. That he did everywhere preach the new birth and justification by faith.

1. He did not everywhere preach the eternal covenant and absolute predestination. In all the times I myself heard him preach, I never heard him utter a sentence, either on one or on the other. Yea, all the times he preached in West Street Chapel and in our other chapels throughout England, he did not preach these doctrines at all - no, not in a single paragraph; which, by the bye, is a demonstration that he did not think them the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

2. Both in West Street Chapel and all our other chapels throughout England, he did preach the necessity of the new birth and justification by faith as clearly as he has done in his two volumes of sermons. Therefore all I have said is true and proveable by ten thousand witnesses." ¹

To conclude after this review of a selection of contemporary judgment, the words of Robert Philip could not be more appropriate. Referring to the funeral sermons, he says:

"Their similarity is however their most instructive and interesting characteristic. It both proves and illustrates the fact that Whitefield's character and career left the same impression upon men of different churches, and men of dissimilar talents and temperament. Wesley and Toplady" (soon enemies over the Calvinist controversy of 1770), "might have written their sermons at the same desk and compared notes before preaching them. Romaine might have exchanged pulpits with Dr. Pemberton of Boston, and Venn and Newton with Brewer of Stepney or Dr. Gibbons. They all bear the same testimony and breathe the same spirit at the grave of Whitefield.....It was not Toplady but Wesley that said of him/

¹ Wesley's Works, vol.XIII, p 400 ff.

him, 'His fundamental point was, give God all the glory of whatever is good in man, set Christ as high and man as low as possible in the business of salvation. All merit is in the blood of Christ'. It was not Wesley but Toplady that said, 'He was a true and faithful son of the Church of England and universally asserted her doctrines to the last, and that not merely in a doctrinal way - though he was a most excellent systematic divine - but with an unction of power from God unequalled in the present day'. It was not a Presbyterian, but Romaine who said, 'Look at the public loss!'", and so on. ¹

With the addition of Whitefield's non-sectarianism and inter-communion with all believers (upon which Wesley has enlarged above), Whitefield's doctrines were thus essentially the same doctrines as all men of the Evangelical Revival professed. They may be gathered up under seven heads:

- (1) The sufficiency, supremacy and inerrancy of the Bible as the Word of God (i.e. with a belief in its plenary inspiration);
- (2) The total depravity of human nature since the Fall;
- (3) The death of Christ upon the Cross the only satisfaction for man's sin;
- (4) Justification by faith (i.e. faith is the one thing needful to obtain an interest in Christ's work for the soul);
- (5) The universal necessity of "heart" conversion (or a "new creation" by the Holy Spirit);
- (6) The inseparable connection between faith and personal holiness;
- (7) God's eternal hatred against sin and His love towards the sinner as equally true (i.e. the certainty of judgment and wrath to come if impenitence and unbelief were persisted in - and yet, at the same time, the riches of God's kindness and compassion and the possibility of repentance and forgiveness in this life).

J.C. Ryle/

¹ Robert Philip, "Life and Times of George Whitefield", p 543.

J.C. Ryle, we may conclude, said with undoubted truth in 1868:

"Call them simple and elementary doctrines if you will. Say, if you please, that you see nothing grand, striking, new, peculiar, about this list of truths. But the fact is undeniable that God blessed these truths for the reformation of England a hundred years ago. What God has blessed, it ill becomes man to despise." ¹

¹ J.C. Ryle, op.cit., p 29

APPENDIX A

Chronology of George Whitefield, 1714-1770

- 1714 Dec Born, Bell Inn, Gloucester
 1728 Left School; work at the Bell Inn
 1729 Mother leaves Inn and brother takes over
 1730 At Bristol; back to school; takes Sacrament
 1732 Pembroke College, University of Oxford
 1733 Met Charles Wesley and other Oxford Methodists
 1735 Conversion; breakdown; convalescence at Gloucester
 1736 Oxford, and then ordination as Deacon by Bishop Benson
 1737 Oxford University, London, Bristol, Stonehouse
 1737 Dec 1st. Visit America (Georgia)
 1738 Nov Lands Ireland, thence to England
 1739 Jan Ordination as Priest, Itinerating - Bristol, Bath, Wales,
 etc., open-air preaching begun here and in London
 1739 Aug 2nd. voyage America: Philadelphia, New York, Georgia
 1740 Jan- Georgia - Orphan House begun
 April
 1740 April Itinerating: Rhode Island, New England, New York,
 Pennsylvania and South Carolina
 1741 Jan England again - London and itinerating - 1st. visit to
 Scotland; Wales; married; London again; Tabernacle
 Society begun
 1742 2nd. visit Scotland; Cambuslang Revival, etc.
 1742-1744 Itinerating England and Wales
 1744-1748 3rd. voyage America - itinerating: New England,
 Massachusetts, etc.
 1748 Visit to Bermudas - then England again. Itinerating
 3rd. visit Scotland; then itinerating England
 1750 4th. visit Scotland - England again
 1751 Ireland (2nd. visit); Scotland (5th. visit) ; England
 1751-1752 4th. visit America ; itinerating
 1752-1754 England and Wales and Scotland (twice 1752, once 1753)
 1754-1755 5th. visit America
 1755-1763 England; Scotland (visits: 1756-7-8-9, 1761-2-3)
 1763-1765 6th. visit America. Itinerating
 1765-1769 England; Scotland (16th. visit)
 1769-1770 7th. visit America
 1770 Sep) Died at Newbury-Port.
 30)
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APPENDIX B

Correspondence Concerning the Calvinistic Controversy
(1739-1742), Chiefly Letters between Whitefield and
John Wesley, with References as to Sources.

<u>Dated</u> -		<u>Description</u> -	<u>Reference</u> -
June 25	1739	Letter from Whitefield to Wesley	Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 253
Aug 3	1739	Letter from Whitefield to a friend (Adams?)	Collected Works, vol.I. p 58
Aug	1739	Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace"	Wesley's Works, vol.VII, p 373 f
	1740	"Hymns and Sacred Poems", by John Wesley and others.	"The Poetical Works of J. & C. Wesley", vol.I. Collected Works, vol.I, p 155
Mar 26	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	Collected Works, vol.I, p 181
May 24	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	Collected Works, vol.I, p 189
June 25	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	"Anti-Methodist Publications Is- sued during the 18th. Century" - R. Green, p 28
Aug 9	1740	Letter of Wesley to Whitefield	Collected Works, vol.I, p 204
Aug 25	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	C.Wesley's Journal vol.II, p 167
Sept 1	1740	Letter of C.Wesley to Whitefield	Collected Works, vol.I, p 209
Sept 23	1740	Letter of Whitefield to a friend (Adams?)	Collected Works, vol.I, p 210
Sept 25	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	Collected Works, vol.I, p 216
Sept 28	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	Collected Works, vol.IV, p 48
Nov 1	1740	Letter of Whitefield to the "Querists" re "Christian Perfect- -ion"	Collected Works, vol.I, p 219
Nov 9	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	Collected Works, vol.I, p 225
Nov 24	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	Collected Works, vol.IV, p 53
Dec 24	1740	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley (Reply to Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace")	Wesley's Works, vol.I, p 300
Jan 17	1741	Entry in J.Wesley's Journal (Cennick's letter to Whitefield)	Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 465
Feb 1	1741	Letter of Whitefield to J. and C. Wesley	
Feb/			

(Appendix B - continued):

<u>Dated</u> -	<u>Description</u> -	<u>Reference</u> -
Feb 1 1741	Entry in J. Wesley's Journal	Wesley's Works, vol.I, p 297
Mar 28 1741	" " " "	Wesley's Works, vol.I, p 305
April 4 1741	" " " "	Wesley's Works, vol.I, p 305
April 1741	Letter of Wesley to Whitefield	Wesley's Works, vol.XII, p 157 f.
May 4 1741	Entry in C. Wesley's Journal	C.Wesley's Journ- -al, vol.I, p 272
Sept 28 1741	Letter of C.Wesley to J.Wesley	Tyerman, op.cit., vol.I, p 482
Oct 10 1741	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley (Reconciliation)	Collected Works, vol.I, p 331
April 23 1742	Entry in J.Wesley's Journal	Wesley's Works, vol.I, p 365
May 12 1742	" " " "	Wesley's Works, vol.I, p 370
Oct 11 1742	Letter of Whitefield to Wesley	Collected Works, vol.I, p 448.

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